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The evolution of the Taliban

Samples, Christopher A.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TALIBAN

by

Shahid A. Afsar
Christopher A. Samples

June 2008

Thesis Advisor:	Thomas H. Johnson
Second Reader:	Heather S. Gregg

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The Taliban organization has undergone a major transformation, since its ouster from power in Afghanistan and continues to wage an effective defensive insurgency or "war of the flea." The study uses results of a survey of knowledgeable participants in the Afghan-Pakistan arena, conducted by the authors, to analyze the current situation and prospects for success. The thesis explains the Taliban's survival and growth in the face of significant odds by analyzing the organizations' strengths, weaknesses, and how it adapts in response to Coalition Forces' counterinsurgency efforts. The Taliban are deeply rooted in the cultural, religious, and ethnic linkages of the Pashtun population. The thesis emphasizes that a conventional counterinsurgency strategy using large-scale military operations and a fundamentally alien system of governance out of harmony with local traditions cannot penetrate the Pashtun tribal, religious, and cultural web in which the Taliban operate. The thesis concludes with recommendations for designing and implementing a broader Coalition strategy to target identified Taliban critical linkages.

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE TALIBAN

Shahid A. Afsar
Major, Pakistan Army
B.S., Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul, 1994
M.S., University of Balochistan, 2005

Christopher A. Samples
Major, United States Army
B.A., Campbell University, 1997
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2003

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2008**

Authors: Shahid A. Afsar
                Christopher A. Samples

Approved by: Professor Thomas H. Johnson
                Thesis Advisor

                Professor Heather S. Gregg
                Second Reader

                Professor Gordon H. McCormick
                Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Taliban organization has undergone a major transformation, since its ouster from power in Afghanistan and continues to wage an effective defensive insurgency or "war of the flea." The study uses results of a survey of knowledgeable participants in the Afghan-Pakistan arena, conducted by the authors, to analyze the current situation and prospects for success. The thesis explains the Taliban's survival and growth in the face of significant odds by analyzing the organization's strengths, weaknesses, and how it adapts in response to Coalition Forces' counterinsurgency efforts. The Taliban are deeply rooted in the cultural, religious, and ethnic linkages of the Pashtun population. The thesis emphasizes that a conventional counterinsurgency strategy using large-scale military operations and a fundamentally alien system of governance out of harmony with local traditions cannot penetrate the Pashtun tribal, religious, and cultural web in which the Taliban operate. The thesis concludes with recommendations for designing and implementing a broader Coalition strategy to target identified Taliban critical linkages.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Probably the most widely recognized image of the present day is that of airplanes hitting the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. On that fateful day, the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda and their hosts, the Taliban[1] in Afghanistan, became household names around the world. Although the Taliban had featured occasionally in news reports, after 9/11 they received massive media attention with stories about their brutality and connections to terrorist organizations.

Although obscure in the west before 9/11, the Taliban were known in their own region of the world. Emerging in 1994 from religious *madrassahs*,[2] they rose to dominance in Afghanistan and achieved amazing victories over their enemies while continuously expanding their influence. Hailed as saviors and feared as oppressors, they were almost a mythical phenomenon that represented the very culture of the country in which they lived – revenge for transgression, hospitality even for their enemies, and readiness to die for a strong sense of honor.[3] They know the Afghan people and their ways, and embed deeply in the complex web of culture, tribalism, religion, and ethnicity.

Amidst the lawlessness and warlord rule that followed Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban offered security to the war weary populace and thus achieved astounding success in a short time.[4] Their rise to power, accompanied by a wave of intimidation, forced the application of their version of Islamic *sharia* on the Afghans, in contrast to the traditional Afghan tolerance for other sects and religions.[5] Later, Al-

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[1] Taliban is a plural form of the Arabic word Talib, which literally means a student of any discipline. In the context of this study, the term implies an Afghan fundamentalist movement of the same name and its members.

[2] Madrassah (Arabic:مدرسة) is the Arabic word for any type of school, secular or religious (of any religion). In this research, the madrassahs refers to the Islamic religious seminaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

[3] These values of the Pashtun culture are defined by the tribal code of Pashtunwali, discussed in ensuing chapters.

[4] Ahmed Rashid, Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 4.

[5] Ibid., 82.

Qaeda elements gained inroads into the Taliban power structure with financial support in return for the sanctuaries they needed to plan the 9/11 attacks.[6] Cooperation with Al-Qaeda ultimately resulted in the Taliban's fall.

After the initial successes of the U.S. and NATO forces and the Northern Alliance in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, the Taliban seemed defeated. People in the streets of Kabul and Kandahar were initially jubilant with talk of a liberal, democratic, peaceful Afghanistan. However, the population outside the major cities feared the Taliban phoenix would arise again. Their fears were not baseless. After six years of continuous Coalition military campaigns,[7] the Taliban remain a viable opponent. They have embraced modern technologies like the internet[8] and have developed new tactics, techniques, and procedures for their struggle. Despite efforts by Coalition partners on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, their numbers and menace are growing throughout the Pashtun belt.

The major policy question is how to stem the Taliban resurgence. For external actors like the U.S. and NATO, this is a question of disabling support for terror networks; for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the question affects their survival as nation-states. If the current Taliban resurgence continues unchecked, very soon their influence may well destabilize the whole South-Central Asian region. A comprehensive approach is needed to forestall such an eventuality.

Presently, the counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies employed on both sides of the border are mainly reactive. Based on a conventional mind-set, they generally fall short of fully addressing the problem. In contrast, the Taliban have transformed themselves while exploiting weaknesses in the COIN strategies employed against them. There is thus a need for a more proactive approach to assess the way the insurgency is evolving and try

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6 Rashid, Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), viii.

7 For the purpose of this study, the terms Coalition and Coalition Forces refer to the governments and security forces of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the U.S., NATO and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces operating in Afghanistan.

8 Hekmat Karzai in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Building a New Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation; Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 67.

to stem the tide before it is too late. This requires a thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Taliban, their methods of operations, and a prediction of their future evolution in order to provide guidelines for a modified COIN strategy. This study endeavors to tackle this perplexing problem.

A.   PURPOSE

This study describes the Taliban phenomenon, elaborates upon their strengths and weaknesses, and explains their transformation in response to the Coalition COIN strategies. The study endeavors to predict the Taliban's future strategic course of action and recommends measures to counter their strengths and exploit their weaknesses in order to design a formidable COIN effort. While recognizing the need for massive changes at tactical and operational levels, the authors limit the scope of this thesis to the strategic level, as the minute details of a modified strategy will certainly require additional extensive research.

B.   MAJOR QUESTION AND ARGUMENT

The Taliban have dominated the Afghan scene, to a greater or lesser extent, since their emergence in 1994. It is mistaken to assume that the sole or major cause of their success was a brutal intimidation campaign or outside support, as the Taliban are deeply rooted in the cultural, religious, and ethnic linkages of the Pashtun population. A conventionally oriented COIN strategy, relying on large-scale military operations and an alien system of governance out of harmony with local traditions, cannot penetrate the local population's tight web of tribal and ethnic identities, and cultural nuances. This study identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the Taliban, predicts their likely strategies, and prescribes some broad measures to assist the formulation of a better COIN policy. It also argues that the current conventionally based COIN strategies cannot ensure success in stabilizing the Pashtun belt in the long term. This goal requires a better, broader based, and less direct approach based on a through evaluation of the Taliban's peculiarities and potential for transformation.

C.   RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

The events of 9/11 generated significant interest in the Taliban, Afghanistan and Pakistan, spawning a flood of writings about the region. Most of the research discusses the problems of insurgency and terrorism in Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan from a historical perspective only. Relatively little research has been directed towards exploring the transformation of the Taliban after 9/11 and identifying them as the *"Insurgés sans Frontiers,"* probably because of the obvious difficulties with studying a covert organization. For example, Ahmed Rashid's excellent work on the Taliban[9] is a milestone but is restricted to a snapshot of the organization as it existed prior to 9/11. With few exceptions, including Johnson and Mason's work[10] and that of Graeme Smith,[11] the dominant perspective does not take into account the ethnic and tribal basis of the Taliban insurgency's spread across borders. Similarly, material about the FATA mostly takes an administrative perspective on the FATA's integration into mainstream Pakistan, without focusing on the phenomenon of "Talibanisation" or on counterinsurgency efforts. For an effective solution to the current instability in the Pashtun belt, a thorough analysis of the Taliban insurgency and its ability to evolve over time is, therefore, in order. The task is an onerous one, requiring extensive research; this thesis will attempt only some small steps in that direction. That said, this study is likely to help policy makers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, NATO and the U.S. in dealing with the cross border threat posed by the Taliban. The thesis may also interest field operatives, helping them to understand their adversary.

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9 Rashid, Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia.

10 Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2007), 71, http://proquest.umi.com/ (accessed December 11, 2007).

11 Graeme Smith, "Talking to the Taliban," *The Globe and Mail* March 22, 2008, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/talkingtothetaliban (accessed April 16, 2008).

D. THESIS CONTENTS BY CHAPTER

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter describes the purpose of the thesis and the research question. It argues the need for developing a broader understanding of the Taliban in order to develop a better approach to counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism efforts in the Pashtun belt.

Chapter II: Methodology

The second chapter describes the methodology utilized during the research. It lays out the general theory and conceptual models used in the study while providing a framework for subsequent analysis of the problem.

Chapter III: Background of the Problem

This chapter frames the historical perspective of the problem. It details the genesis of the Taliban phenomenon in view of their operational environment, culture, resources, and ethnic profile. The chapter also describes the known and implied Taliban aims and strategies in order to provide a basis for subsequent analysis.

Chapter IV: Structure of Taliban

Chapter IV focuses on the structure of the Taliban. It discusses their formal and informal layout and operational mechanisms in conjunction with their leadership and decision-making processes. The chapter assesses the motivation and beliefs of Taliban operatives to give a better understanding of their recruitment and human resource processes. Interviews and results of a survey conducted with Coalition field operatives support various assumptions and inferences by the authors.

Chapter V: Coalition COIN Strategies

The fifth chapter portrays the COIN strategies adopted by Coalition forces on both sides of the border. This description helps identify the positive and negative effects of COIN strategies on the Taliban.

Chapter VI: Effects, Adaptation, and Future Options for the Taliban

Chapter VI describes the visible operational results of current Taliban strategy and its effects on the insurgency. The chapter recognizes the Taliban strengths and weaknesses along with some visible adaptation trends that appear responsible for their survival against COIN strategies as part of the attempt to predict likely future tendencies for the Taliban.

Chapter VII: Summary and Recommendations

The final chapter offers conclusions and recommendations for designing a robust COIN effort to counter the Taliban strengths and exploit their weaknesses. It presents the conclusions of the thesis, stressing the importance of an alternative approach to COIN in the Pashtun belt and emphasizing the importance of success for regional and global stability and peace.

E.   CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the subject of the study and described its significance to the ongoing Global War on Terror (GWOT). It established a need to analyze the Taliban phenomenon and its transformation after 9/11 in support of Coalition efforts to bring peace and stability to the region. The next chapter describes the methodology used during the course of the research and explains the general theory and conceptual models relevant to the study, thus laying out broad parameters for analysis.

II.   RESEARCH DESIGN, THEORETICAL FRAME, AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for strategy and victory. – Sun Tzu[12]

A.   INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research design, conceptual models, and theory applied to the research questions described in Chapter I.   The research design and conceptual models provides the architecture in which we examine the Taliban's re-emergence in Afghanistan and their development in Pakistan in order to better understand how the Taliban have survived and grown since 9/11 despite Coalition counterinsurgency efforts.

B.   RESEARCH DESIGN
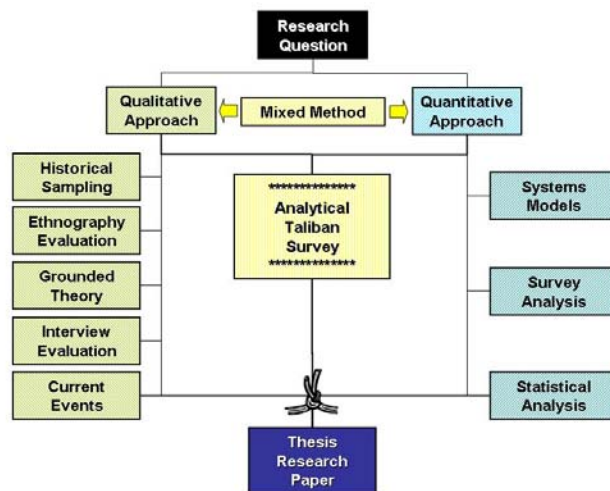
Figure 1.   Research Design Model

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the mixed-method approach used throughout the thesis. The journey commences with the research questions and concludes

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[12] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Lionel Giles (El Paso: El Paso Norte Press, 2005), 138.

with an analytical research paper addressing critical quandaries facing the Coalition and Pakistani governments and militaries. A variety of data, both qualitative and quantitative, is required to assess the Taliban insurgency and the counterinsurgency strategies arrayed against them. A survey of persons who have operated in the region, interviews with combat leaders and support and interagency personnel, and the authors' personal experiences in Afghanistan and Pakistan supply the data for the thesis.

The qualitative approach assembles information from a myriad of sources. Works analyzing the history and ethnography of Afghanistan and the FATA allow the reader to understand the culture and composition of the Taliban.[13] Thesis research would not amount to much if generally accepted theory were not involved; thus COIN Theory as it applies to the conditions in the Pashtun belt is presented. Information gathered through interviews with several military and civilian officials involved in Afghanistan and Pakistan is discussed, along with media reports, journal articles, and conference papers on the current nature of the Taliban insurgency.

The quantitative approach includes the analysis of various data sources and systems models applied to the research question. Two primary and one secondary 'systems models' are used to depict the Taliban and the Coalition approaches to defeating them. The Congruence Model (Figure 2 below) analyzes the Taliban as an organization. The Components of System Model Inputs (Figure 3 below) further highlights the *input* portion of the Congruence Model; this model identifies all of the internal and external factors that influence the Taliban. The second systems model is the Insurgency as a System (Figure 4 below), a variation of the Congruence Model, which identifies critical linkages that coalition forces must target. These systems models are discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

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[13] Sample works include Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), Ahmed Rashid's *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Olaf Caroe's *The Pathans, 550 B.C.-A.D. 1957* (New York: St. Martin's, 1958), Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Maqsudul Hasan Nuri's *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Responses* (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2005), Rizwan Hussain's *Pakistan & Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Co, 2005), and Michael Griffin's, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).

Survey analysis provides the foundation of the research. The authors developed a survey that questioned military officers, government officials, and academics about the following areas: the Taliban as an organization, current Coalition COIN strategies, possible Taliban courses of action, and priorities for future Coalition COIN efforts. The survey was limited to personnel from the U.S., NATO, and Pakistan military and government agencies with experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[14] The second source of quantitative data is surveys from within Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as the 2007 *A Survey of the Afghan People* from the Asia Foundation and *Understanding FATA* from the Community Appraisal and Motivation Program. The third source of quantitative information involves statistical analysis of figures compiled by trusted agencies.

C.   TALIBAN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The first model utilized to analyze the Taliban as an organization is the Congruence Model (Figure 1 above). This model aims at dissecting the Taliban's inputs, strategy, organizational structure, and outputs, thus providing a holistic view. Assessing the enemy through such an approach is significantly different from most conventional military analysis. The conventional approach only takes into consideration the enemy's capabilities, disposition, composition, and most likely or most dangerous courses of action. This model, however, provides insight on how and why the Taliban has managed to survive, and more importantly, on how they have adapted and grown.

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[14] See Annex A, Taliban Survey for details on the questions and analysis of the responses.
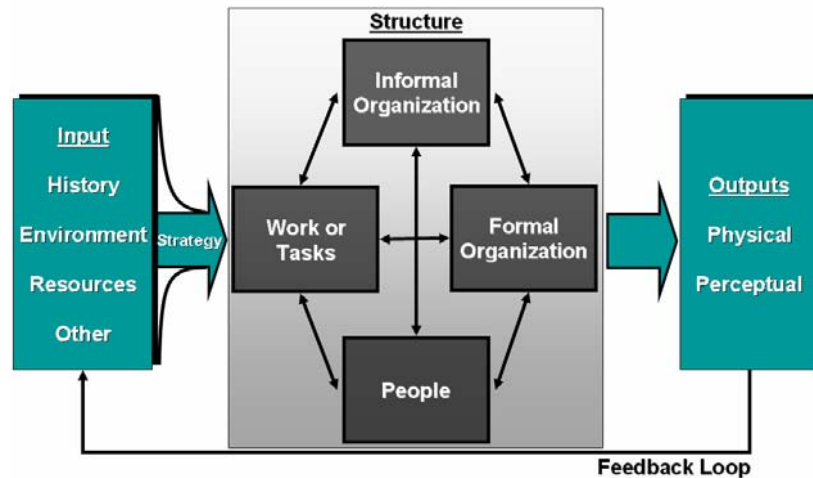
Figure 2.   The Congruence Model[15]

As suggested by Figure 2 above, the inputs of an organization consist of internal and external frameworks that shape their identity and strategy, including their history, environment, and resources. The history of an organization is the foundation for understanding why they function as they do. History can also help to predict the organization's future actions by revealing "the crucial developments that shaped it over time—the strategic decisions, behavior of key leaders, responses to crises, and the evolution of values and beliefs."[16] Every organization, be it a business, government agency, criminal or insurgent group, operates within a larger environment. Portions of the larger environment identified in this study include the physical terrain of the Pashtun belt, culture, religion, and other organizations such as NATO, ISAF, and relevant governments and militaries. The larger environment influences the organization through demands and constraints imposed as well as opportunities.   The last input for an organization is its resources, which includes every asset available including the people, allies, training, monetary capital, equipment and information. Historical, environmental and resource inputs affect the strategy employed by an organization. The strategy to configure and utilize resources to best achieve their goals will be determined "in response

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[15] Adapted from Oliver Wyman, "The Congruence Model: A Roadmap for Understanding Organizational Performance," Oliver Wyman Group, 8, http://www.oliverwyman.com/ow/pdf_files/Congruence_Model_INS.pdf. (accessed April 12, 2007).

[16] Ibid., 6.

to the demands, threats, opportunities, and constraints of the environment within the context of the organization's history."[17] The inputs to the Taliban are discussed in detail in Chapter III.

The "structure" portion of the model analyzes the transformation of ideals into actions. As suggested by Figure 2 above, this analysis is broken down into four sections: the tasks or work performed, the people who make up the organization, the formal organization, and the informal organization. The work or tasks performed are activities by Taliban members to accomplish or further their strategy. The people are those responsible for conducting the work. It is imperative to understand the characteristics and culture of the people – their knowledge, needs and preferences, perceptions and expectations, as well as their demographics – in order to persuade or dissuade them from conducting insurgent activities. The formal organization provides the "structures, systems, and processes each organization creates to group people and the work they do and to coordinate their activity in ways designed to achieve strategic objectives."[18] The informal organization provides unwritten guidelines, such as ideologies or tribal codes, which greatly influence individual and collective behaviors, values and beliefs. The structure of the Taliban is depicted in Chapter IV.

The output segment of the model describes the positive or negative yield of the organization in physical and perceptual realms. For example, the ambush killing NATO soldiers emboldened the resistance and increased recruiting, while the suicide bombing killed several civilians, turning the populace against the movement.[19] The product of labor is continually analyzed in the context of achieving strategic goals and a feedback loop provides additional input adjust, morph, and flex the organization as necessary. This evaluation and feedback provides the basis for the Taliban's continued illusiveness and flexibility. The Congruence Model presents a detailed framework within which the

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[17] Wyman, 7.

[18] Ibid., 9.

[19] This example comes from the personal experience of the author who served in Afghanistan during OEF rotations in 2003, 2004, and 2005-06 through observations of Taliban operations tempo, use of night letters, propaganda, etc.

qualitative and quantitative data are applied to reveal the insurgent force's characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. The output and feedback loop of the Taliban is described in Chapter VI.

An unconventional problem requires an unconventional approach! The Congruence Model provides the necessary mechanism for analyzing and understanding an insurgent enemy in a noncontiguous battlefield.

D.   THE CONGRUENCE MODEL INPUTS EXPANDED

The components of this systems input model are broken down into four categories: history, environment, resources and other factors. The first three categories fall directly out of the congruence model lens and focus on both internal and external frameworks that make-up the Taliban. The category of other environmental factors includes external factors that either directly or indirectly affect the Taliban. All of these factors provide the foundation for Taliban growth, and they play a large role in its character, tendencies, trends and conduct. These components are discussed in detail in Chapter III.[20]

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[20] With the exception of Human Terrain, the components of input are self-explanatory. To prevent confusion, for the purpose of this thesis Human Terrain is defined as people and their support and intelligence networks.

Components of Systems Model Input	
1	History
2	Physical Terrain
3	Culture
4	Religion
5	Human Terrain
6	Al Qaeda and other Jihadist Militants
7	Narcotics, smuggling and Criminal Networks
8	Regional Players
9	NGOs and Humanitarian Agencies
10	Presence of NATO/ISAF/US Forces
11	Presence of Afghan Security Forces
12	Presence of Pakistani Forces
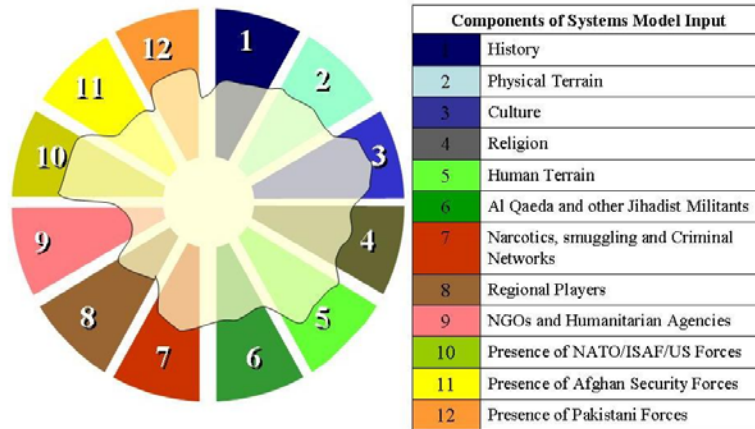
Figure 3.   Components of System Model Inputs[21]

E.   COALITION APPROACH: CONCEPTUAL MODEL, THEORETICAL FRAME AND PROPOSITIONS

The second conceptual model applied in this study focuses on the supply side of the insurgency through an input-output systems model that complements the Congruence Model. The thesis employs Lietes and Wolf's system approach, outlined in *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* to identify the critical linkages necessary for the Taliban's continued survival. (See Figure 4 below.) Knowledge of the Taliban's characteristics, strengths and weaknesses using the Congruence Model analysis will help the coalition develop a coherent COIN strategy to attack their most vulnerable linkages.

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[21] The authors developed the Components of Systems Model Input in order to detail several factors affecting the Taliban as an organization and their ongoing insurgency. The pie chart is based on survey results and interviews and is not quantifiable. The relative importance of the issues for the Taliban is indicated by the area of each slice of the pie; thus, we believe that Physical Terrain and Culture are much more important than Regional Players and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
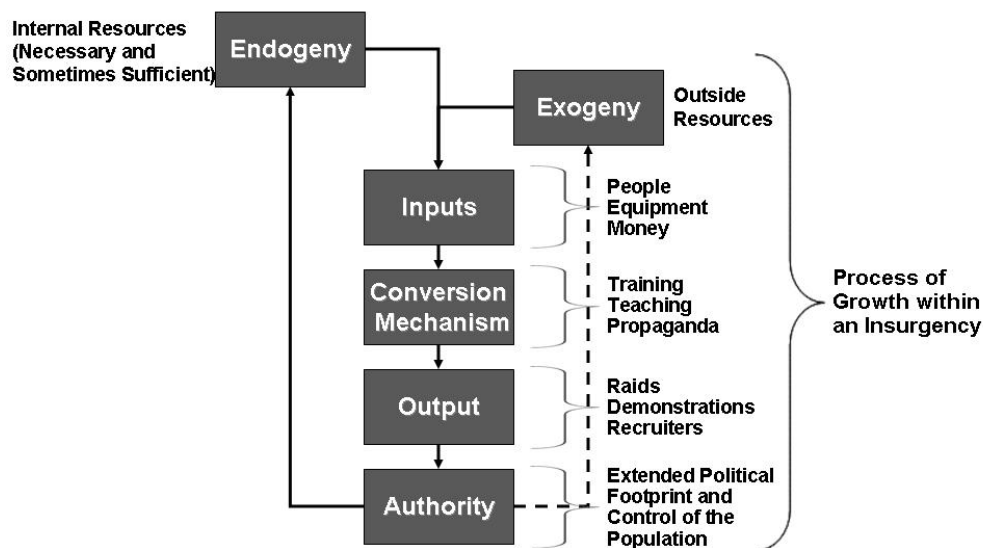
Figure 4.   Insurgency as a System[22]

The traditional "hearts and minds" approach to counterinsurgency focuses on the demands of the insurgents and the populace. Although there is utility on the demand side, the authors find the Lietes and Wolf supply approach highly useful in identifying associations between the insurgent force and its support mechanisms.   Insurgencies receive their inputs from mainly internal (endogenous) and sometimes external (exogenous) sources.   These inputs consist of people, food, equipment, money, and cadres. Coercion, persuasion, or a combination of the two achieves the internal support necessary. The conversion mechanism is synonymous with the Congruence Model's structure portion, wherein the inputs transform into outputs; characteristics include such things as training, teaching, propaganda, and logistic operations. The outputs of the model afford an understanding of the violent and nonviolent activities that aim to further their cause and undermine the ruling government's legitimacy. This leads to the authority section of the system wherein the insurgency seeks to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. The last segment of the system is the pump. The pump allows the insurgency to grow. The insurgents' newfound authority and success breeds greater internal and external support as these resource centers perceive the insurgency as a viable option to

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[22] Model adapted from concepts found in Nathan Lietes and Charles Wolf Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytical Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1970), http://rand.org/pubs/reports/2006/R0462.pdf (accessed April 12, 2007).

the current government; thus, success begets success. The critical linkages identified using this conceptual model provides coalition forces with a priority of effort in countering the Taliban's strengths and exploiting their weaknesses. Historical examples, COIN Theory, data from interviews and surveys will compliment model in developing a pragmatic approach to defeating the Taliban.

The authors ascribe to Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* for the primary theoretical frame and the basis for assessing the coalition's efforts.[23] Four propositions[24] are used to test the coalition COIN strategies.

(1) The support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent.

(2) Support is gained through an active minority.

(3) Support from the population is conditional.

(4) Intensity of efforts and vastness of means are essential.[25]

This theory applied to the Coalition's efforts within the Pashtun belt identifies several shortfalls in past and current COIN strategies. More importantly, the theory and propositions when applied to the Taliban strategy and methods of operation further delineates their weaknesses and options to exploit them.

F.   CONCLUSION

This research encompasses several systems and methods for gathering information. The hybrid mixed-methods approach permits freedom to choose the methods, techniques and procedures that best answer the thesis questions. With the pragmatic knowledge gathered through theory, conceptual models, historical and anthropological studies, interviews, surveys and current events, this thesis presents a detailed analysis of the Taliban as an organization – inputs, strategy, structure, and

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[23] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

[24] Galula identified these as the four main laws but, for the purpose of this research, they will be referred to as propositions.

[25] Galula, 52-55.

outputs and the successes and failures of the coalition's COIN strategy. The next chapter provides an understanding of the inputs—the internal and external factors—affecting the Taliban composition and conduct and concludes by describing what appears to be their current strategy.

III. BACKGROUND: KNOW THY ENEMY

> If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle. — Sun Tzu[26]

A.   INTRODUCTION

If the Afghan government and Coalition partners hope to succeed in defeating the ongoing insurgency across the Pashtun belt, they must know their enemy. This chapter employs an expanded version of the input section of the Congruence Model to describe the unconventional enemy that the coalition faces. Specifically, this chapter examines the twelve universal input mechanisms that influence the Taliban organization (see Figure 3 above). The input mechanisms include: history, physical terrain, culture, religion, human terrain, Al Qaeda and other *Jihadist* militants, narcotics, regional players, NGOs and humanitarian agencies, presence of NATO/ISAF/U.S. forces, presence of Afghan security forces, and the presence of Pakistani forces.   These inputs set the stage for analysis in later chapters. This chapter closes with a description of the known and implied Taliban strategy.

B.   HISTORY

The history of the Taliban helps to identify patterns of past actions and to analyze their current behavior. Key points include historical events involving strategic and operational issues, leadership, crisis, and core organizational values.[27]   This section delves into different aspects of Taliban history, including the influence of ancient warrior culture, the Soviet invasion and the resulting development of *mujahideen*[28] fighters, the

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[26] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Lionel Giles (El Paso: El Paso Norte Press, 2005), 138.

[27] Wyman.

[28] *Mujahideen* (literally "strugglers") is a term for Muslims fighting in any type of struggle. Mujahid, and its plural, mujahideen, come from the same Arabic root as *jihad* ("struggle"). Here, the *mujahideen* refers those who fought the Soviet Union and the communist Afghan government.

madrassa[29] with their selectively interpreted religious ideology, the civil war and warlordism that followed the withdrawal of Soviet forces, the emergence of the Taliban as a hope for peace for a war weary people, and the downfall of the Taliban and the ongoing insurgency.

The region inhabited today by the Pashtuns has a long history of invaders who tried, mostly in vain, to overpower them. Since Alexander's appearance in Pashtun areas in 326 BC,[30] a large number of foreign military forces appeared on the Afghan scene, including those of the Persian Empire, Scythians, Kushans, Sakas, Huns, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, British, Russians, and most recently the United States. The Pashtuns have defended their homeland against all sorts of adventurers while remaining fiercely independent. Most conquerors were either defeated outright or absorbed into the tribal structure of the Pashtuns through the centuries. Despite the apparent ease in conquering the Pashtun areas, no outside power has ever been able to completely subdue it.[31] The tribes in the region learned and adapted to the military strategies of their invaders and utilized the newfound tactics and equipment to fight among themselves until presented with an external threat. A military orientation has shaped the culture and outlook of the area. As Johnson writes, "A Pashtun is never at peace, except when he is at war."[32] The people of the area have thus been inclined to reject any form of strict authority even at the cost of discord and insecurity.[33]

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[29] *Madrasa* refers to any type of school, secular or religious. While acknowledging that most of the *madrassas* are not bad, this research refers to the religious schools that teach an ultraconservative and misperceived version of Islam.

[30] Alison Behnke, *The Conquests of Alexander the Great* (Breckenridge: Twenty-First Century Books, 2007), 99.

[31] Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1978), 415.

[32] Thomas H. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2007), 118, http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/May_2007/Johnson.pdf (accessed November 21, 2007).

[33] Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 134.

The "Great Game" in the nineteenth century played a dominant role in shaping the current political landscape of the region.[34] It also gave the Pashtuns their first encounter with a modern military power through the three Anglo-Afghan Wars in 1839, 1878, and 1919. After abortive attempts to gain headway inside Afghanistan, Russia and Britain agreed to create a buffer in the shape of Afghanistan between their zones of influence. The international boundary known as the Durand Line between British India and Afghanistan was demarcated in 1893. The new border, however, did not affect the lives of the frontier Pashtun tribes who maintained strong ethnic and family connections with their cousins across the border through the provisions of Easement Rights. The British also accorded the tribes on their side of the border with a peculiar semi-autonomous status that was maintained after the creation of Pakistan in 1947 in the form of the FATA.[35]

With occasional disturbances,[36] the Pashtun areas on both sides of the border were dormant during most of the twentieth century. The relative stability of Zahir Shah's four-decade rule ended in 1973. The instability that ensued after his departure provided the catalyst for the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan to overthrow the weak and splintered government in 1978. The religious elements of Afghanistan, led by the *mujahideen,* resisted the communists' radical reforms package, which included drastic changes in land ownership, new taxes, compulsory education for women, and participation of women in non-traditional roles in society.[37] The Soviet Union deployed troops into Afghanistan in December 1979 to aid their communist ally against the Islamic militias and counter the threat of radical Islamist power along its soft underbelly of the Muslim majority Central Asian republics. The Soviet involvement further fueled the rise of *mujahideen* resistance and calls for *jihad*. The Soviet military waged a brutal

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[34] For a detailed history of the Great Game see Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game : The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1992).

[35] For details of the administrative arrangements in the FATA, see *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (Karachi: Pakistan Publishing House, 1986), and Noor ul Haq, Rashid Ahmed Khan and Maqsood ul Hasan Nuri, "Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute Papers* 10 (March 2005).

[36] Exceptions include the *Pashtun* uprisings in the 1920s.

[37] For details of the reforms which upset the countryside see Radek Sikorski, *Dust of the Saints : A Journey to Herat in Time of War (Khak-i Avaliya)* (New York: Paragon House, 1990).

counterinsurgency campaign accompanied by thorough destruction of the already meager socioeconomic framework of backwards nation. In nearly ten years of occupation, the Soviet forces and their communist Afghan allies allegedly killed 1.3 million Afghans, completely destroyed the infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, and caused approximately 5.5 million to flee into neighboring Iran and Pakistan, most of whom found their way to Pakistan's tribal belt.[38] Despite heavy investments in men and material, the Soviets were never able to gain unopposed access to the countryside, especially in the Pashtun areas.[39] Following a long and costly counterinsurgency effort, the Soviet Union completely withdrew its forces from Afghanistan in February 1989, leaving Najibullah's communist government to fend for itself. A civil war followed, resulting in Najibullah's overthrow in April 1992. In the six months before their departure, the Soviets handed over huge caches of weapons and ammunition to Najibullah's forces; they continued material support for two years after their departure. The defeat of the communist government quickly revealed the differences in the fractured alliance of *mujahideen* parties. Each faction had its leader or warlord in a geographical region of the country with aspirations for power. Fighting broke out among the warlords leading to widespread looting and rapine. This strife between the warlords and a war weary population set the stage for the radical ideas of the Taliban to easily take hold in Afghanistan.[40] "The Taliban mythology cites their creation as a reaction to the injustices that were perpetrated during the *mujahedin* era of Afghan politics."[41]

The cadre of the Taliban emerged from the Pashtun refugee camps. It was there, in some of the *madrassas*, that a selectively interpreted version of Islam, *wahhabism,*[42]

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[38] The Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, eds. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, trans. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 255-256.

[39] David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998).

[40] Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*.

[41] "The Taliban," (Monterey: NPS Program for Culture and Conflict Studies, 2007), http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Docs/Pubs/The%20Taliban.pdf (accessed November 27, 2007).

[42] *Wahhabism* is a branch of Islam practiced by those who follow the teachings of Muhammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab - the founder and namesake of the movement. For details on Wahhabism, see David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006).

influenced students (*talib*) to adopt an ultraconservative approach to social issues and politics.[43] Despite differences with the fundamentalist religion espoused by the Taliban, the people gathered behind them because of promises to deliver peace by eliminating the menace of the warlords and narcotics.[44] Theological students fighting for professed rights and freedoms are not a new phenomenon in the region. Winston Churchill spoke of a "host of wandering Talib-ul-ilums, who correspond with the theological students in Turkey and live free at the expense of the people. . . ."[45] This tradition and the aura of a righteous religious student on the quest for peace gave students immense rapport with the Pashtun people. The popularity of the Taliban rapidly spread and they experienced continued success in consolidating power.

The Taliban seized control of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan in November 1994. Here they gained their *de facto* religious legitimacy among the rural Pashtuns when their leader, Mullah Omar, wore the sacred cloak of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) in a public gathering[46] and declared himself the *Amir-ul-Momineen* (Leader of the Faithful).[47] "This was seen as the divine sanction of Mullah Omar's rule."[48] The event is probably the most important milestone in the Taliban history as it provided the movement with a charismatic leader who was thereafter able to draw upon the mysticism inherent in the Pashtun culture.[49]

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[43] Peter Marsden, *The Taliban : War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 73.

[44] Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 6 (November/December 1999), 22-35.

[45] Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, 72.

[46] For details of the event see Norimitsu Onishi, "A Tale of the Mullah and Muhammad's Amazing Cloak," *New York Times*, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F04EEDB123EF93AA25751C1A9679C8B63 (accessed November 28, 2007).

[47] Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, 80.

[48] Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*.

[49] Joseph A. Raelin, "The Myth of Charismatic Leaders," *T + D* (March 1, 2003), 46, http://www.proquest.com/ (accessed December 2, 2007).

The Taliban made rapid military progress after 1994. They controlled 95 percent of the country by 1997.[50] Despite their speedy success and initial euphoria, the Taliban regime, led by Mullah Muhammad Omar, gradually lost the support of the international community and the Afghan populace due to the very strict enforcement of its version of Islamic law. The Taliban banned television, music and dancing, and prohibited women from attending school and working outside of the home. They carried out massive atrocities against the non-Sunni population[51] of Afghanistan and allegedly supported militant Sunni sectarian outfits in Pakistan. Mullah Omar also interacted with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban hosted Al-Qaeda training camps and leadership in the areas under their control.

The events of September 11, 2001, and the Taliban's refusal to extradite bin Laden triggered Operation Enduring Freedom and the rapid collapse of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Many Taliban fighters assimilated back into Afghan society, while the leadership went underground, only to emerge later as the core of a vibrant insurgency campaign. Failed expectations of a war-ravaged Pashtun population and dominance by non-Pashtuns in the central government provided the impetus to maintain the insurgency. The Taliban are currently waging an insurgency against the Afghan government and coalition forces.

On the Pakistani side of the border, their tribal sympathizers have been at odds with the Pakistan security forces in the FATA and other areas of North Western Frontier Province (NWFP), thereby further complicating the problem. The problem also has roots in the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, when FATA was used as a launch pad for *mujahideen* sponsored by Pakistan and the U.S. The tribal areas became a hotbed for extremism as the sprouting of *madrassahs*, abundance of modern weaponry and influx of Afghan refugees significantly changed the environment. After the Afghan *jihad*, many foreign *Mujahideen*, mostly Arabs, settled in FATA and were absorbed in the tribal society through marriage and the like. The rise of Taliban from the religious seminaries was viewed favorably in the area due to ethnic, religious, and ideological linkages as well as cultural affinities. After

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[50] Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy - CRS Report for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007).

[51] This includes 19 percent *Shi'a* and one percent others, including Sikhs, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists.

9/11 and the commencement of the Operation Enduring Freedom, the radical elements in the FATA mobilized some support for the Taliban and started targeting the Pakistani government apparatus because of crucial Pakistani support to OEF. Currently, Pakistan has deployed over 100,000 troops in different parts of FATA to counter pro-Taliban militants loosely aligned with the main Taliban movement in Afghanistan and with similar operational signatures. Recently, Taliban sympathizers in Pakistan joined forces to form an umbrella organization called Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban Movement) with Baitullah Mehsud as leader.[52]

C. ENVIRONMENT

The Taliban are influenced by an external environment which places demands and constraints on them while simultaneously providing opportunities.[53] As suggested by the effects illustrated in Figure 3 above, the major components of the environment have bearing on the Taliban's character. Several of these factors are discussed in detail below.

1. Physical Environment

The first environmental dynamic is the physical terrain in which the Taliban and their sympathizers operate. The physical terrain within both Afghanistan and the FATA is very harsh. The area is over 250,000 sq. miles[54] of which more than 70 percent is mountainous. It is a combination of arid plateaus, thickly forested mountains, and craggy valleys. Only 12 percent of the land in Afghanistan is arable. Southern and Western Afghanistan is comprised of mostly desert with the exception of the Helmand River and surrounding area. Lines of communication infrastructure are either underdeveloped or virtually nonexistent. In the semi-mountainous terrain, the roads are generally aligned along the watersheds and valleys, and pass through deep gorges that have been the sites of murderous ambushes by local warriors for centuries (See Figure 5 and Figure 6

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[52] Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Taliban Unites Under Baitullah Mehsud," *The Long War Journal* (December 15, 2007), http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/12/pakistani_taliban_un.php (accessed January 15, 2008).

[53] Wyman.

[54] The total area of Afghanistan and the FATA is slightly larger than the state of Texas.

below). The houses are generally well-fortified and built on defendable vantage points. It is extremely difficult to control the access routes and the population in such a landscape. The harsh mountainous terrain is conducive to insurgent activities, providing multiple pockets of inaccessible spaces solely governed by tribes that allow militants freedom of maneuver[55] while making conventional military operations ineffective and expensive in terms of troops and resources. Overall, the rugged geography embodies the region's culture, which remains virtually unaffected by time. Afghanistan is "a place where the land fashions the people, rather than the people fashioning the land."[56]
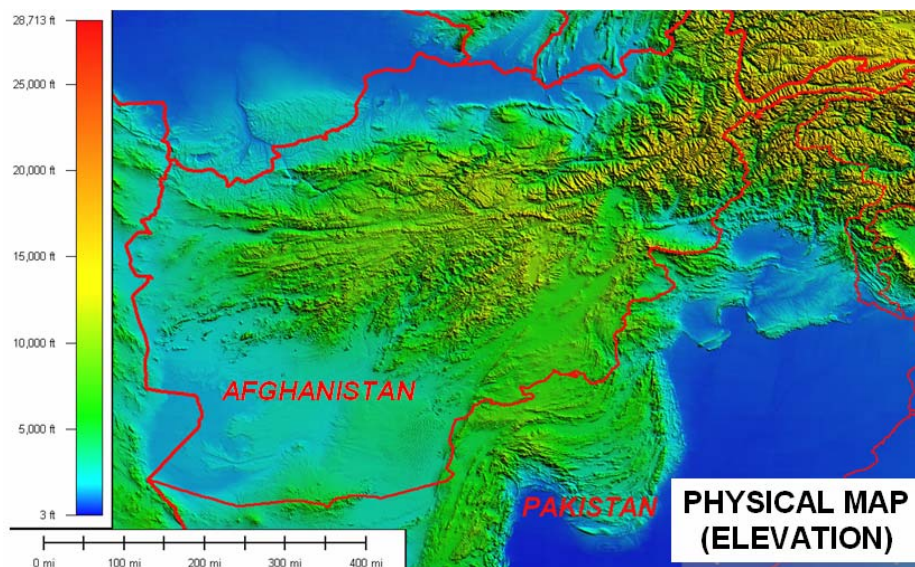
Figure 5.   Physical Terrain[57]

55 "CIA - the World Factbook 2007," Central Intelligence Agency, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html (accessed November 21, 2007, 2007).

56 Caroe, xii.

57 Produced using Global Mapper® 9 and databases from Geo Community, GIS Data Depot at http://data.geocomm.com/ and NASA's Shuttle Radar Topography Mission: Jet Propulsion Laboratory at http://www2.jpl.nasa.gov/srtm/cbanddataproducts.html (accessed January 9, 2008).

Figure 6.   A Sample Ground Route Showing the Likelihood of an Ambush[58]
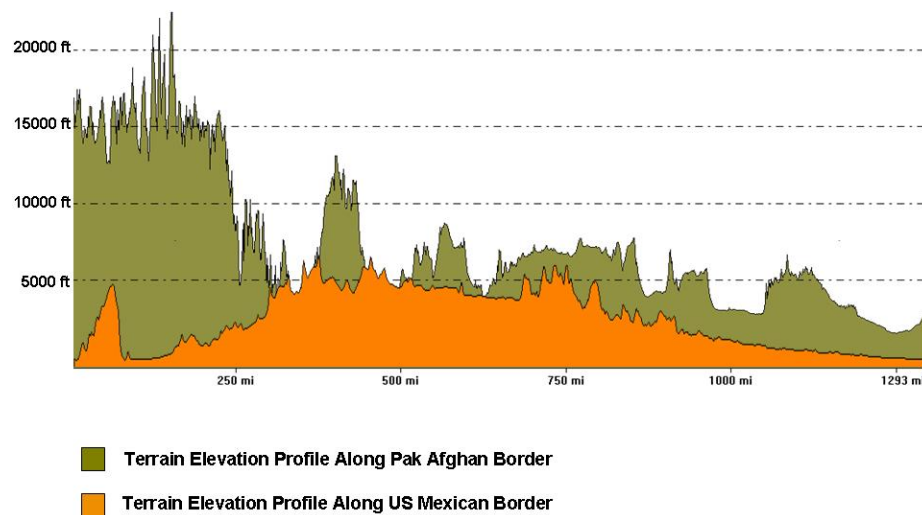
Figure 7.   Comparison of Pakistan-Afghan Border with U.S.-Mexico Border[59]

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[58] Image created online using Google Earth ® with default imagery and elevation data (accessed April 11, 2008). This illustration depicts a route north of Deh Rahwood, Oruzgan Province where multiple ambushes have taken place against U.S./NATO/Afghan troops and security forces.

[59] Produced using Global Mapper® 9 and databases from Geo Community, GIS Data Depot at http://data.geocomm.com/ and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Shuttle Radar Topography Mission at http://www2.jpl.nasa.gov/srtm/cbanddataproducts.html (accessed January 9, 2008).

A comparison of the Pakistan-Afghanistan and U.S.-Mexico borders (Figure 7 above) illustrates the treacherous terrain that coalition forces face in attempts to interdict Taliban and Al Qaeda members as they move between countries. The Pakistan-Afghanistan and U.S.-Mexico borders are comparable in total length, but the differences in elevation are staggering. Many supposed pundits, news commentators, and politicians clamor that success in Afghan's counterinsurgency fight lies in sealing off the border. It is apparent that those arguing for "sealing the border" do not realize that the U.S. is unable to seal its own border with Mexico, and yet it should be easier to seal the U.S.-Mexico border given the less dramatic topography. In 2005, border agents apprehended 1.2 million illegal migrants attempting to slip into the country. It is estimated that only one in every four attempting to enter the U.S. are captured.[60] Afghanistan and Pakistan, with their limited resources, must deal with the realities of brutal mountainous terrain that divides not only their disputed borders but the Pashtun tribes as well. These tribes share more than a tribal affiliation. They share a culture defined by the *Pashtunwali*.

2. Culture

Culture[61] is probably the most important factor concerning the situation. "Wars are not tactical exercises writ large…. They are … conflicts of societies, and they can be fully understood only if one understands the nature of the society fighting them."[62] Taliban presence is most pronounced in the Pashtun areas. "While it would be incorrect to refer to the Taliban insurrection or resurrection as merely a Pashtun affair, it would not be far from the mark."[63] The culture of the area depends greatly upon the *Pashtunwali*

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[60] From U.S.-Mexico Border Fence / Great Wall of Mexico Secure Fence; http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/systems//mexico-wall.htm (accessed January 14, 2008).

[61] Culture - the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group. For additional information on culture, see Kaplan and Manners' *Culture Theory* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press), 1986.

[62] Michael Howard as quoted in Johnson, On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan, 93

[63] Ibid., 122.

code, which is a code of honor that predates Islam and is specific to the Pashtun tribes.[64] The *Pashtunwali* serves as the traditional norm by which the people of the Pashtun tribes are expected to conduct themselves. "A Pashtun must adhere to the code to maintain his honor to retain his identity as a Pashtun."[65] If one violates this honor code, they are subject to the verdict of the *Jirga.*[66] Some of the more important facets of the code include:

a) *Nang (honor).* Under this code a tribesman is obliged to employ every means possible to shield and protect his honor and the honor of his family. The honor of a Pashtun rests on a host of apparently small nuances which, if infringed, demand a restoration of honor even at the cost of one's life.

b) *Badal (revenge).* This concept most often refers to "revenge killings."[67] When a family member is killed or the honor of a woman in one's family is involved, a "revenge killing" is necessary to restore family honor. This killing can be immediate or occur generations later if the family whose honor has been violated is in a weak position at the time of infraction. The Taliban use the concept of *badal* to recruit new fighters into by alienating the population from the Coalition forces because of the civilian deaths from Coalition bombings and "hard knock operations."[68]

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[64] The term "tribe," as used in this thesis, refers to "localized groups in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organization, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct (in terms of customs, dialect or language, and origins) and have been politically unified at least for much of their history." Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, ""Tribes" and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005," *Crisis States Working Papers* 2, no. 7 (September 2006), 2, http://www.crisisstates.com/download/wp/wpSeries2/wp7.2.pdf, (accessed November 28, 2007).

[65] Johnson, *On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan*, 121

[66] A *jirga* is a tribal assembly of elders which takes decisions by consensus, particularly among the *Pashtun* but also in other ethnic groups near them; they are most common in Afghanistan and among the *Pashtun* in Pakistan. For details of *jirga* tradition see Ali Wardak, *Jirga - A Traditional Mechanism of Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan* (New York: United Nations Public Administration Network, 2004), http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN017434.pdf (accessed August 11, 2007); and Mumtaz Ali Bangash, "Jirga: Speedy Justice of Elders. What is Not Decided in the Jirga Will Never be Decided by Bloodshed," Khyber Gateway, http://www.khyber.org/culture/jirga/jirgas.shtml (accessed August 11, 2007).

[67] The term *badal* can also refer to a type of wedding performed in *Pashtun* tribal culture.

[68] "Expert: Afghan War Needs New Strategy," *United Press International* May 21, 2007, http://www.upi.com/Security_Terrorism/Briefing/2007/05/21/expert_afghan_war_needs_new_strategy/485 1, (accessed November 28, 2007).

c) *Melmastia (hospitality).* This concept gives new meaning to the Motel Six slogan "We'll leave the light on for you." *Melmastia* means offering hospitality to all visitors without hope of remuneration or favor and also enjoins the obligation of protection. Any Pashtun who can gain access to the house of another Pashtun, can ideally claim asylum in the house, regardless of the previous relationship between the two parties.[69] The Taliban use this to their advantage and thus have a built-in auxiliary for insurgency efforts with food and shelter wherever they travel within the Pashtun belt.

d) *Nanawatay (forgiveness).* This means to go in and seek forgiveness from the victim to whom a wrong has been done. It is used when the vanquished party is prepared to go to the house of his enemy to beg forgiveness and make peace with him. This is the only alternative to *Badal*. Overlooking this factor by foreign forces has enabled Taliban to exhort aggrieved persons to join the insurgency to restore their honor or avenge the death of family members.

e) *Hamsaya (neighbor).* This literally means 'one who shares the same shadow.' This can be compared to early clientele states or later vassal states during medieval times. It is a broad concept of servitude for protection from stronger tribes, including military service in exchange for land (*mlatar*). This concept explains how tribes quickly follow whoever is the strongest and how the Taliban consolidated power so quickly in the 1990s.[70] The Pashtun tribes have generally remained embroiled in clan and tribal rivalries. However, they rally against outsiders if threatened. They are politically very savvy and use alliances and counter-alliances to their advantage, using this ability in the present war against terror. "The rules of this war are a far cry from the easy slogans of

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[69] Niloufer Qasim Mahdi, "Pakhtunwali: Ostracism and Honor among the Pathan Hill Tribes," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 7 (1986), 150-154.

[70] Jolanta Sierakowska-Dyndo, *Tribalism and Afghan Political Traditions* (Warsaw: Institute of Oriental Studies, Warsaw University, 2003), 53-59, http://www.wgsr.uw.edu.pl/pub/uploads/aps04/5Sierakowska-Dydo_Trybalism.pdf (accessed August 1, 2007).

'you're either with us or against us.' Indeed, Pashtun history is filled with heroes who played both sides for the benefit of tribe, family, and honor."[71]

3. Religion

The Taliban utilize culture greatly to their advantage but rely upon religion as the other pillar of their movement. Afghanistan is 99 percent Muslim, consisting of 80 percent Sunni and 19 percent *Shi'a*.[72] The Pashtun tribes are mostly Sunni Muslims except for certain *Shi'a* tribes in Kurram Agency of the FATA. In the Afghan Islamic tradition, Islam has been mixed with pre-Islamic beliefs and tribal customs of *Pashtunwali*.[73] The Taliban have further transformed the tradition to include an ultraconservative interpretation of Islam. The core of the religious ideology stems from some of the *madrassas* founded during the Soviet-Afghan war. With the influx of support from Saudi Arabia, many of the *madrassas* shifted towards a very orthodox brand of Islam which looks to "follow a *Salafist* egalitarian model,"[74] with more stringent methods of enforcement, while denying any form of dissidence. "The Taliban represented nobody but themselves and they recognized no Islam except their own."[75] The majority of Afghanistan's populace did not traditionally follow this interpretation of the religion but had to contend with its enforcement during the Taliban reign. [76]

4. Ethnicity

The ethnic aspect of the environment discussed here is fairly straightforward. The ethnic breakdown within Afghanistan is as follows[77] (See Figure 8 below for details):

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[71] Owais Tohid and Scott Baldauf, "Pakistani Army must Go through the Pashtuns," *The Christian Science Monitor,* June 25, 2004, http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0625/p07s02-wosc.html (accessed September 4, 2007).

[72] *CIA - the World Factbook 2007.*

[73] Marsden, 78.

[74] Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, 75.

[75] Rashid, Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia, 85-93.

[76] Ibid., 85-93.

[77] *CIA - the World Factbook 2007.*

- Pashtun	42 percent	- Aimak	4 percent
- Tajik	27 percent	- Turkmen	3 percent
- Hazara	9 percent	- Balochi	2 percent
- Uzbek	9 percent	- Other	4 percent
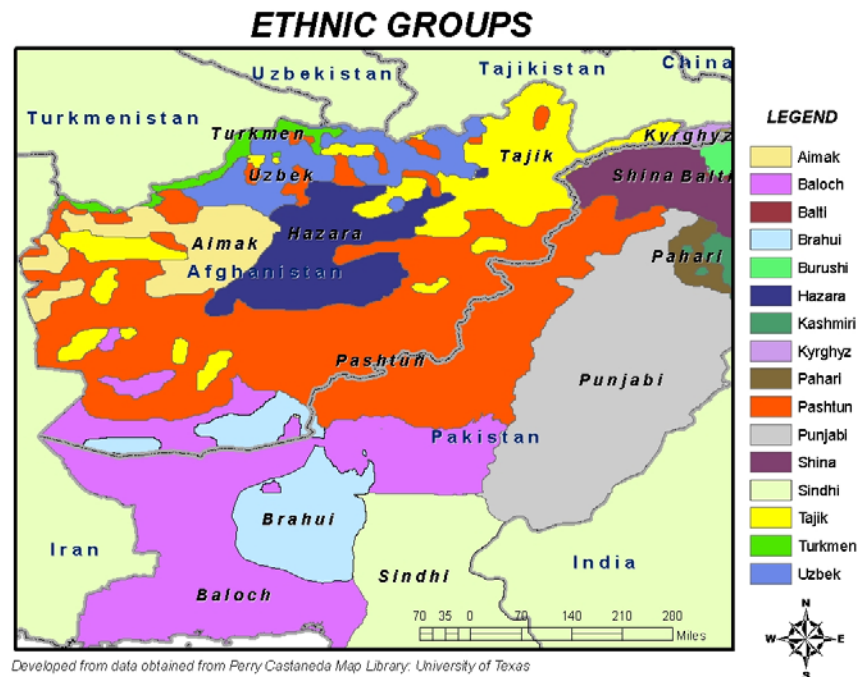
Figure 8.   Ethnic Layout of the Area[78]

The Pashtun tribe dominates the Taliban with a smattering of opportunists from other tribes. During Taliban rule and subsequently during the insurgency, the other tribes have been the target of attacks. A coalition of northern tribes (Turkman, Tajik, and Uzbek) made up the bulk of the northern alliance troops that allied with the U.S. to overthrow the Taliban in 2001.

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[78] Produced using ArcGIS9.2 and databases from Geo Community, GIS Data Depot at http://data.geocomm.com/ , Pakistan's Ethnic Map from Perry Castaneda Map Library, University of Texas at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/pakistan_ethnic_80.jpg and Afghanistan Ethnic Map from University of Texas Libraries at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_ethno_1982.jpg (accessed January 9, 2008)

5. Pashtun Tribal Breakdown

A plurality of Afghans is ethnic Pashtun. The Pashtuns are comprised of several tribes and subtribes spread throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pashtuns in Pakistan are larger in number than those in Afghanistan and are mostly concentrated in the FATA and NWFP. Pashtun tribes and subtribes are interwoven in a complex interplay of obscure genealogies, mythical folklore, historical alliances, and conflicts thereby making it extremely difficult to draw exact dividing lines between the groups. Nonetheless, it is generally agreed that five major tribal groups encompass the Pashtun tribes in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. These groups are the Durrani, Ghilzai, Karlanri, Sarbani, and Ghurghusht, with the Durrani and the Ghilzai the two most influential players (See Figure 9 below).[79]
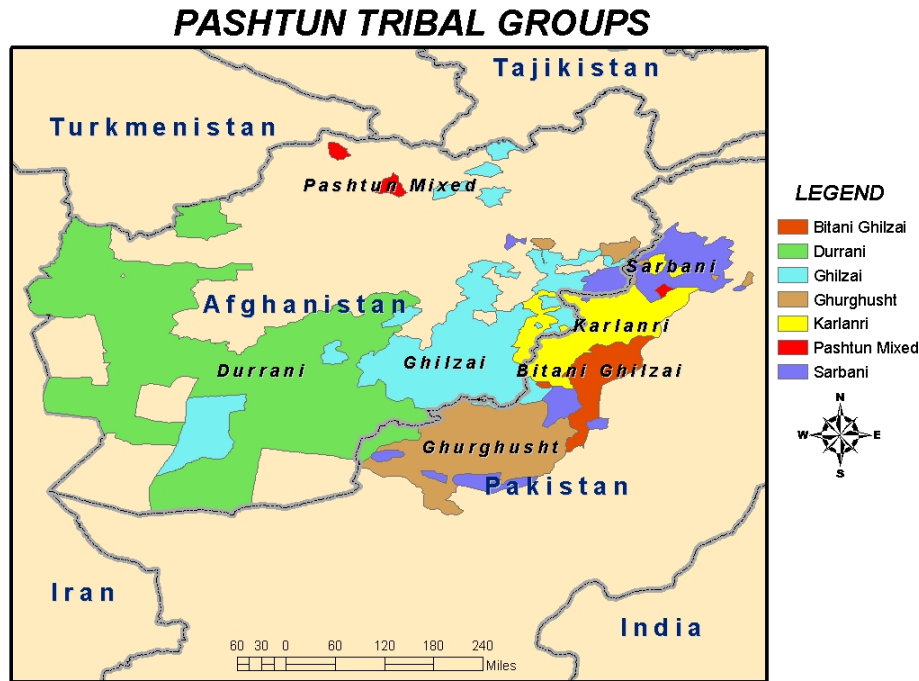
Figure 9.   Geographic Layout of Major Pashtun Tribal Groups[80]

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[79] For details of Pashtun tribal genealogies and geographical areas of tribes, see Caroe, and Thomas H. Johnson, "Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS," Program of Culture and Conflict Studies, Naval Postgraduate School, http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/ (accessed January 11, 2008).

[80] Derived from Caroe and Johnson, *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at NPS*.

The Durrani tribal confederation, mostly concentrated in Southeast Afghanistan, has traditionally provided the leadership within the Pashtun areas since Ahmad Shah Durrani founded a monarchy in 1747. Ahmad Shah is considered the founder of modern Afghanistan because of his ability to unite the factional tribes. The current president of Afghanistan, Harmid Karzai, is also a Durrani. According to traditional folklore, the Durranis, or Abdalis as they were known before Ahmad Shah, are sometimes considered a sub-part of the Sarbani or Sarbanri tribal group.[81]

The Ghilzai tribal group is concentrated mostly in Eastern Afghanistan and has historically been an archrival of the Durranis. Some of the major Taliban leaders today, including Mullah Omar, belong to this tribal group.[82] The Ghilzais form part of another rather obscure tribal confederation known as the Bitanis, which includes other prominent subtribes such as the Bhittanis, Niazis, Lodis, and Surs that mostly settled around Bannu and Tank areas of NWFP.[83]

The Karlanris are the third largest group of the Pashtun tribes and are referred to as the hill tribes.[84] They straddle the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the general areas of Waziristan, Kurram, Peshawar, Khost, Paktia, and Paktika.[85]

Sarbani or Sarbanri are divided into two major groups which are geographically separated. The larger group is located north of Peshawar and includes tribes such as Mohmands, Yusufzais, Shinwaris, while the smaller contingent of Sheranis and Tarins are scattered in northern Balochistan.[86] Because of their linkages with the Durranis, who are considered a part of the group, this faction comprises the traditional aristocracy of the Pashtun tribes.

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[81] Caroe, 12.

[82] For a further discussion of the *Pashtun* tribal dimensions of the Taliban, see Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, 71

[83] Caroe, 15.

[84] Ibid., 22.

[85] Ibid., 21.

[86] Ibid., 12.

The last major tribal group is the Ghurghusht. They are mostly concentrated throughout northern Balochistan and consist of Kakars, Mandokhels, Panars, and Musa Khel among others. Some subtribes like Gaduns and Safis can also be found in NWFP.[87]

D. RESOURCES

The Taliban resources include consideration of the full range of accessible assets ranging from manpower to technology and everything in between. The key to analyzing Taliban resources is to identify the relative quality and to what extent those resources are fixed or flexible.[88] The primary resources examined here are religious militant outfits, human terrain[89] and the opium trade.

The first set of resources surveyed includes the religious militant outfits such as Al Qaeda and some sectarian groups. Al-Qaeda provides the Taliban's "cause" some legitimacy amid a myriad of transcontinental terrorists with global agendas. Exemplifying this are the actions of Osama bin Laden when he pledged to follow Mullah Omar, the Leader of the Faithful, which supports Omar in the eyes of the Pashtun tribes and of Islamic groups worldwide. Aside from offering assistance to the Taliban in the form of information warfare, it provides support that is monetary, personnel (foreign fighters), technological (advanced Improvised Explosive Devices and communications) and training (tactical) support. These resources are external and generally flexible as to their reliability. Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Muhammadi (TNSM) is also a strong Taliban sympathizer and is mainly active in the FATA and Swat regions of NWFP. Other groups which support or coordinate with the Taliban include the Central Asian insurgent outfits like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and a number of small militant bands on both sides of the border.

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[87] Caroe, 19.

[88] Wyman, 5.

[89] For the purpose of this research, Human Terrain will be defined as people and their support and intelligence networks.

Some of the *madrassas* in the Pashtun belt that teach a violent version of the Islamic ideology are ideal recruiting grounds for the Taliban, thereby mixing ethnic and religious sentiments. Mohammed Ali Siddiqi, a *madrassa* expert, explains the phenomenon as "an accident of history":

> The Leadership of the Islamic movement has fallen to the Pashtuns as they had resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan successfully. Then the Pashtun Taliban triumphed [in Afghanistan] ... Since the *madrassas* had played a prominent role in the anti-Soviet *jihad*, they acquired a reputation both as recruiting grounds for *mujahideen* and as centers of learning.[90]

All this support filters down to the next level, the people and their support and intelligence networks. This human terrain asset is the most important to the success or failure of the Taliban insurgency. Simply put, an uprising cannot be maintained without the support of the people. The Pashtun are the group most vulnerable because of the peculiarities of culture and ethnic linkages. Of late, they have been more amenable to the Taliban because there is no Pashtun dominance in the Kabul administration. Moreover,

> Pashtun suspicions and mistrust of the government were further heightened by the Afghan Transitional Administration's (ATA) inability to protect Pashtuns   from the wave of human rights abuses perpetrated by insurgents and warlords since the fall of the Taliban.[91]

There are approximately 28 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[92] This large pool contributes recruits, auxiliary support personnel, money, weapons, and an intelligence network with which the Taliban wage insurgency. The people and recruits, spread throughout their respective geographical areas, provide outstanding and real time intelligence on most troop movements so Taliban fighters can flee when outnumbered, or set up ambushes and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) when the odds favor them. With more than two generations of war hardened inhabitants to draw from, the Taliban recruit experienced fighters who know the terrain and can survive in the harsh

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[90] *Pakistan: Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2007), http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4742 (accessed July 1, 2007).

[91] Johnson, *On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan*, 97.

[92] *CIA - the World Factbook 2007*.

environment. The added bonus is the unbelievable amount of ordnance, weapons and ammunition that were cached by the *mujahideen* during the Afghan-Soviet war, the subsequent civil war, and the Taliban's consolidation of power. Taliban human resources are flexible because of the power struggle between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IROA) and the Taliban.

The last asset examined here is the revenue and associated benefits of working with drug traffickers and the opium trade in Afghanistan. With improved irrigation and recent year's rains, Afghanistan has virtually become a narco-state.[93] The record 2006 opium harvest was estimated at over $3 billion.[94] The 2007 estimates are even higher. Afghanistan currently produces 93 percent of the world's opium[95] and it is estimated that almost one half of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product depends on the opium trade. The exact amount that the Taliban receive is unclear. The Taliban are able to capitalize on the drug trade by taxing the farmers, land owners, and drug traffickers. When they ruled the country, the Taliban vowed to eliminate opium, but they look to it now as a necessary evil to further their cause in three main venues: 1) most importantly, it provides the populace an illegal economy to operate within outside the umbrella and to the detriment of Kabul, 2) it provides needed funds for the insurgency, and 3) it helps to poison the people of the west, especially in Europe, where 90 percent of the heroin supply comes from Afghanistan. The drug traffickers and the Taliban help each other with weapons, personnel, and funding in a concerted effort to destabilize the legitimate IROA.

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[93] House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Afghanistan, *Afghanistan: The Rise of the Narco-Taliban: Testimony of Congressman Mark Kirk,* 2007, 1, www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/kir021507.pdf (accessed November 29, 2007).

[94] *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [2007]), www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf (accessed October 1, 2007).

[95] Ibid.

E.   OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The other environmental factors that affect the Taliban include regional players throughout South Asia, NGOs and humanitarian agencies, and the presence of coalition forces including Pakistani, Afghani, U.S. and NATO soldiers.

1.   Regional Players

Regional players form an important part of the environment in which the Taliban operate as they contribute to the overall political scenario affecting the movement. The region affected by Taliban, directly or indirectly, stretches across Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. An area of immense strategic importance, its components share certain historical roots, affinities, and enmities which have profound impact on their interrelationships and even domestic issues. "Many of Afghanistan's challenges, often thought of as domestic, are also regional in character."[96] Afghanistan and the Pashtun areas have historically been an arena for competing interests of the regional players. While most of the international actors have had time-based objectives in the area, the regional players have nearly permanent interests which must be viewed from the perspective of the peculiar ethnic and political history of the region. The only good sign recently is that since the fall of the Taliban, arguably "Afghanistan's neighbors have assessed that support for a stable, independent, and economically strengthening Afghan state is preferable to any achievable alternatives."[97] Apart from interest in the future of Afghanistan, the other major factor influencing the roles of the regional players is their domestic situation. These phenomena create a complex web of relationships in which the Taliban operate.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan is the most critical regional player for the future of Afghanistan. It is also among those most affected by the Taliban. The Pakistani involvement in the Afghan *Jihad* against Soviets, supported by the United States and

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[96] Marvin G. Weinbaum, Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood; United States Institute for Peace, Special Report No. 162, June 2006, 6, http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr162_afghanistan.html (accessed December 3, 2007).

[97] Ibid.

Saudi Arabia, created a complex legacy that haunts Pakistan even today because of continuous turmoil and violence linked to the issue. Pakistan has serious interests in Afghanistan's stability and development because of the very close economic and cultural links. A stable Afghanistan would provide better economic opportunities for Pakistan and ensure its access to the resource rich Central Asian region. The stability in Afghanistan will also ensure stability in Pashtun dominated western Pakistan where a Taliban inspired radical insurgent situation might destabilize the country. Therefore, Pakistan has the potential to become a critical player in the fight against Taliban despite accusations to the contrary.

Despite its cultural affinities with Iran, Afghanistan, with the exception of the Herat area, never figured prominently in the Iranian regional perspective prior to the Soviet Invasion. Iran focused primarily on the Persian Gulf region.

> The Afghan state stands today more as an opportunity for Iranian expansion economically and culturally than as a rival politically and militarily. Yet Afghanistan comes into view strategically mainly out of concern that other powers might take advantage of a weak Afghan state to menace Iran.[98]

Iranian belligerence with Taliban, resulting from their Sunni outlook and the persecution of *Shi'a* minorities, allowed the Iranians to cooperate with U.S. during OEF. Iran is interested in expanding its economic role in Afghanistan. A stable Afghanistan is beneficial to Iran in the long run, so Iran opposes a Taliban led insurgency. However, recent reports of Iranian support to Taliban, if true, signal a different and more complex relationship.[99] Iranian actions may be viewed in the context of Kabul's relationship with the United States. Because of U.S.-Iranian belligerence, Iranian long term strategic interests are ill-served by a sustained U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Iran might,

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[98] Weinbaum, Afghanistan and Its Neighbors, 11.

[99] On June 14, 2007, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that the flow of weapons from Iran to the Taliban had reached such large quantities that it is difficult to believe it is taking place without the Iranian government's knowledge. A similar statement by Nicholas Burns, U.S. Undersecretary of State, said there was "irrefutable evidence" that the government of Iran was sending in arms shipments. See Tom Shanker, "Iran May Know of Weapons for Taliban, Gates Contends," *New York Times*, June 14, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/14/world/middleeast/14gates.html (accessed December 3, 2007) and "Iran arming Taliban", CNN News, June 13 2007, http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/06/13/iran.taliban/index.html (accessed December 3, 2007).

hypothetically and despite ideological differences, decide to manipulate the already ongoing Taliban insurgency to its own advantage.[100] If this situation materializes, the Taliban may be able to overcome some key equipment shortfalls (e.g. advanced anti-air weaponry) and gain inroads into *Shi'a* groups within Afghanistan.

The former Soviet Central Asian Republics also have a major role in the situation. Their ethnic ties with the non-Pashtun northern minorities make them ideal opponents of the Taliban due to the latter's persecution policies. These states have also been concerned about the spread of radical Islamist militancy across their borders and their fears have been furthered by past Taliban support to entities like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Therefore, these states have strong reasons to assist the Afghan government against Taliban. Russia and China share similar concerns because the Taliban recognize and support the Chechen and Uighur separatists. However, a neo Cold War with Russia over access to Central Asian resources or problems in Sino-U.S. relations could change the paradigm to the benefit of the Taliban.

India has also been a dominant player on the Afghan scene and has used Afghanistan as an arena for Indo-Pak hostility. India has always been wary of Pakistani influence in Afghanistan and has traditionally opposed any group with perceived links to Pakistan.[101] This defined India's relationship with the Taliban once India aligned itself with the Northern Alliance. India has moved heavily into reconstruction following the Taliban government's fall and is supposedly interested in the stability and development of Afghanistan as a strategic ally against Pakistan.[102] However, with a growing level of Taliban-inspired violence inside its borders, Pakistan has repeatedly accused India of fostering the militants in FATA and Balochistan in an effort to undermine Pakistan.[103]

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[100] Seth G. Jones, Afghan Problem is Regional, Commentary July 4 2007, RAND Corporation, http://www.rand.org/commentary/2007/07/04/UPI.html , (accessed December 3, 2007).

[101] Khalid Hasan, "U.S. should Respect Pakistan's Need for Political Space: CSIS," *Daily Times,* April 5, 2008, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2008%5C04%5C05%5Cstory_5-4-2008_pg7_9 (accessed April 27, 2008).

[102] Ibid.

[103] Amin Tarzi, "Afghanistan: Kabul's India Ties Worry Pakistan," *Radio Free Europe* (April 16, 2006), http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/04/B5BFE0BE-ED5D-43DE-A768-99A6AB1E6C5C.html (accessed April 27, 2008).

Pakistan accused India of playing the game of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" by covertly funding Taliban inside Pakistan to fight the Pakistan government while maintaining its current overt posture in Afghanistan. If true, this scenario dramatically alters the situation for the Taliban.

In view of these factors, it appears that the regional players in relation to the Taliban are not static but in a constant state of flux, depending on their interests or the actions of their perceived competitors. If the Taliban can use the actions of these players to their advantage, the movement's overall situation and resource base can change significantly.

2.   Non Governmental Organizations and Humanitarian Aid

Non Governmental Organizations continue to provide vital assistance to the people of Afghanistan, hence directly affecting the Taliban. In general, NGOs serve as advocates for ordinary people by working with the governments where they provide assistance, as well as with the United Nations.[104] In Afghanistan, NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations focus primarily on the rural populace in supporting economic development, emergency aid (mainly food and medical assistance), agricultural development, education, refugees, human rights, social programs and women's rights. Several NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations work with Afghan ministries to rebuild the beleaguered nation.

Hundreds of NGOs and humanitarian aid outfits work with the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development to reconstruct Afghanistan. Five major players provide assistance: (1) the International Federation of Red Cross, Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)[105] provides medical assistance to the people, especially to millions of refugees who fled the Soviet occupation, (2) the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief

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[104] For additional information on NGO work within the UN, see "Paper on NGO Participation at the United Nations," http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/ngo-un/access/2006/0328participation.htm (accessed January 15, 2007).

[105] For additional information on IFRC, see "What we do." IFRC. http://www.ifrc.org/what/index.asp?navid=04_01 (accessed April 12, 2008).

Everywhere (CARE)[106] fights poverty through economic development and self help programs, (3) Afghanaid[107] focuses on development opportunities throughout rural areas; (4) the International Rescue Committee (IRC)[108] gives emergency medical assistance to refugees in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, and (5) United States Agency for International Development (USAID)[109] provides assistance with Afghan development. The USAID has provided $4.4 billion dollars in development initiatives since 2002 to Afghanistan.[110] In effect, NGOs and humanitarian aid institutions have provided Afghans lifeline for decades, with the bulk of the support coming after the Soviet invasion and greater emphasis since 9/11. Recent assistance has inadvertently provided sustenance for the Taliban and their insurgency. Yet the Taliban bites the hand that feeds them—and for good reason, when one considers the consequences.[111]

The Taliban increased attacks against NGO and humanitarian organizations because these organizations' assistance helps to legitimize the IROA. A genuine government that provides services, education and development to the populace spells disaster for the Taliban's insurgency, since without popular support, any insurgency is dead. With increased attacks on NGOs in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan, humanitarian aid efforts have been thwarted.[112] Most aid projects have been refocused in relatively peaceful areas in the Northern and portions of Western Afghanistan. The

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[106] For additional information on CARE, see "Afghanistan Special Report, After the Election: What Next? Humanitarian Work and Insecurity." CARE. http://www.care.org/newsroom/specialreports/afghanistan/index.asp? (accessed April 12, 2008).

[107] For additional information on Afghanaid, see "Welcome to Afghanaid." Afghanaid. http://www.afghanaid.org.uk/index.phtml (accessed April 12, 2007).

[108] For additional information on IRC, see "The IRC in Afghanistan: Rescue a Generation." International Rescue Committee. http://www.theirc.org/where/the_irc_in_afghanistan.html (accessed April 12, 2007).

[109] For additional information on USAID, see "Asia and the Near East." USAID. http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/ (accessed April 12, 2007).

[110] News release, USAID Afghanistan, "Outgoing USAID Director Announces Completion of Over 1000 Development Projects Since July 2006," dated July 19, 2007, http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Article.159.aspx (accessed January 15, 2007).

[111] This assertion comes from personal experience of the MAJ Samples who seized NGO aid items from Taliban strongholds and caches in Zabol, Kandahar, Helmand, and Oruzgan provinces.

[112] "NGO Insecurity in Afghanistan," Afghnistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) and CARE, May 2005, http://www.care.org/newsroom/specialreports/afghanistan/20050505_ansocare.pd (accessed January 14, 2007).

contrast in the aid to the people within the Pashtun belt and those in the North exacerbates ethnic friction and fuels the Taliban propaganda machine. The NGOs feel increasingly targeted because they are seen by the Taliban as associated with coalition military forces.[113]

3. Coalition Forces

Coalition forces impact the Taliban to varying degrees. To accommodate the complexity of the subject, Coalition efforts and their effects on the Taliban are presented in Chapter V.

F. TALIBAN STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

As outlined in Chapter II, the Taliban's strategy is determined "in response to the demands, threats, opportunities, and constraints of the environment within the context of the organization's history."[114] Thus, the inputs of the Congruence Model greatly influence how the Taliban can best achieve their goals. This section shifts from historical and ethnographic examples to information gathered through interviews and the Taliban Survey in order to illustrate the Taliban's strategy. It provides an objective view on the perspective of the counterinsurgents, a view not often explored.

The Taliban's insurgency strategy is one of patience. They are conducting a classic "war of the flea," a type of warfare that causes the enemy to suffer the "dog's disadvantages: too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough ... the dog succumbs to exhaustion."[115]

The frequently heard axiom of the Pashtun people in regards to the Taliban is "The Americans may have the watches but we have the time."[116] Their plan is time-

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[113] "NGO Insecurity in Afghanistan," 2.

[114] Wyman, 7.

[115] Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: Guerrilla Warfare in Theory and Practice.* (New York: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1965), 27-28. The idea of the Taliban utilizing "War of the Flea" tactics is first identified in Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan.*

[116] Johnson, *On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan*, 93. Both authors of this thesis heard this axiom used throughout Southern Afghanistan and the FATA.

phased, with continual mobilization of the religious public in Afghanistan and Pakistan that invokes the sufferings of Muslims the world over. The next stage involves rallying the Pashtun tribes through the *Pashtunwali* code and religious ideology by portraying their subjugation by the non-Pashtun government in Kabul. After this, they intend to build confidence among the Afghan and tribal populace in the Taliban organization while simultaneously decreasing the legitimacy of the IROA, Coalition forces and the government of Pakistan.[117] Once the Western "crusaders" are expelled by military means or NATO's lack of political will, the Taliban hope to establish firm control of eastern and southern Afghanistan and later push for influence in the western Pakistan, establishing their version of an Islamic state.[118]
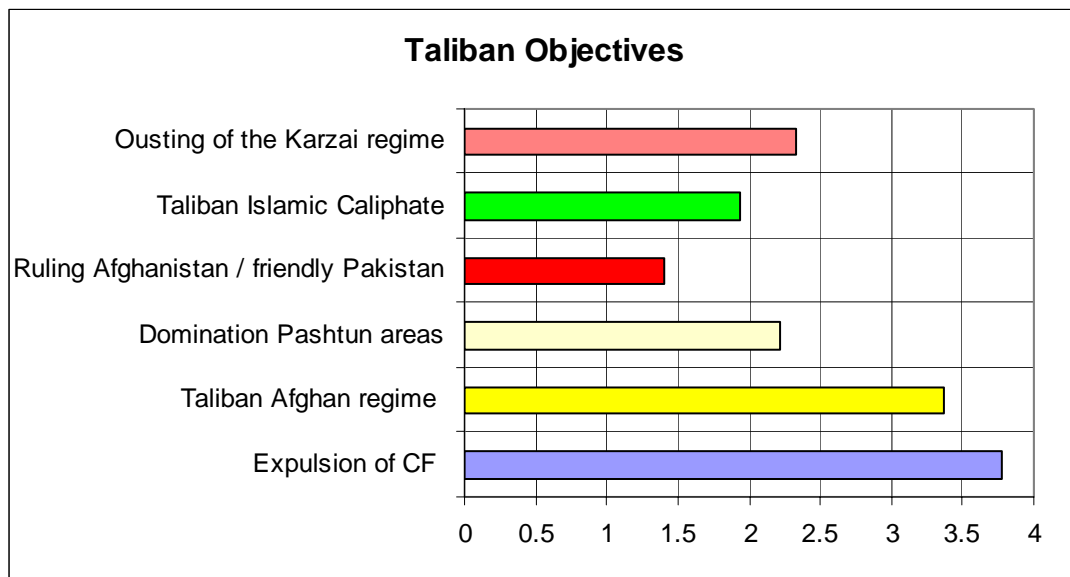
Figure 10.   Perceptions about the Taliban Objectives[119]

The authors' survey illustrates that the key objectives of the Taliban are perceived by respondents as expelling Coalition forces from Afghanistan and resuming Taliban rule

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[117] Aisbah Allah Abdel Baky, "The Taliban Strategy: Religious & Ethnic Factors," *The World in Crisis,* http://198.65.147.194/English/Crisis/2001/11/article11.shtml (accessed October 1, 2007).

[118] Interview with Professor Thomas Johnson, Naval Postgraduate School, conducted May 24, 2007.

[119] Shahid Afsar and Chris Samples, "Taliban Survey" (Opinion Survey, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA. This survey question, identifying the key objectives of the Taliban, was answered by 942 people, comprised mostly of CF personnel. The participants were asked to rank the six possible answers from one to six. The graph depicts the average placement of each answer. For example, Expulsion of CF was ranked as the highest priority with an average score of 3.75 out of 6.

of the country while ousting Karzai and the IROA from power. Although the Taliban appear to have only Afghanistan in their sights, their overall objectives have shifted through the years as Al Qaeda gained influence on the Grand *Shura*. An anonymous contributor's comments underscore this:

> What the Taliban wants is a return to its pre-9/11 status. ... The Taliban are driven by two competing interests: the desire to re-conquer Afghanistan and the desire to reestablish a caliphate. The first is Pashtun-centric, the second more Al Qaeda inspired. The danger of each wing to the Taliban is that the Pashtun-centrists may be amenable to cooption in a new Afghanistan, and that the *jihadists* with a more global view may be marginalized into criminals and simple terrorists.[120]

In an interview, LTG Kearney, former SOCCENT Commander, agreed that the focus of the Taliban is becoming more widespread.

> The Taliban are basically Afghanistan-Pashtun specific without any outside ambitions. However, lately Al Qaeda has been trying to hijack the Taliban into adopting a wider area of support outside of Afghan borders. The Taliban would be basically happy to regain their pre 9/11 status, but Al Qaeda wants them to operate in a larger context.[121]

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[120] *The Taliban.*

[121] Frank Kearney, Lieutenant General, Deputy Commander U.S. Special Operations Command, Interview by authors, written notes. MacDill AFB , FL, November 13, 2007.
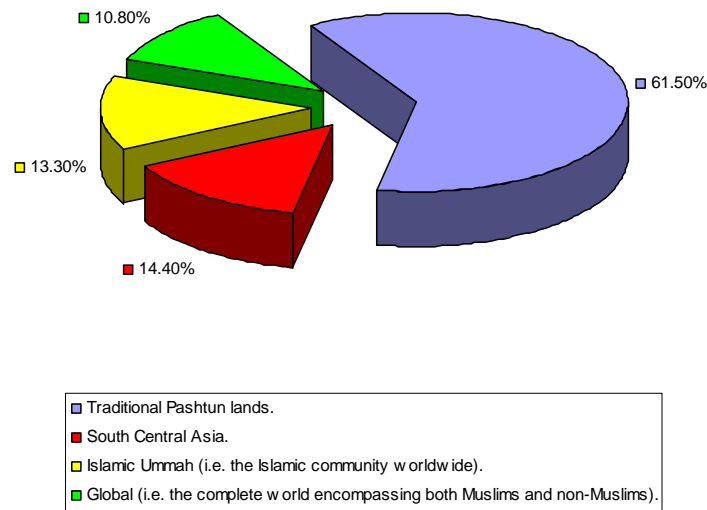
Figure 11.   Perceptions about the Taliban's Geographical Aims[122]

Nearly 40 percent of operators in our survey believe that the Taliban have greater designs than just Afghanistan. These other intensions include South Central Asia, the Islamic *Ummah*, and global aspirations (Figure 11 above). It is unrealistic to believe that such ends can be met without taking care of business at home. Admiral Cox, former commander, Joint Intelligence Command, Central Command states,

> They have some realistic short-term objectives and some probably unrealistic long-term ones. Short term ones include expulsion of the Coalition out of their main areas. Their minimalist mid-term aims concern Pashtun lands of Afghanistan and Pakistan.[123]

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[122] A total of 942 people answered this survey question identifying the possible Taliban geographical aims. The participants were asked to choose what they believed the Taliban's aims were.

[123] Robert J. Cox, Rear Admiral; Commander Joint Intelligence Center, U.S. Central Command, Interview by authors; written notes. Tampa, FL, November 14, 2007.

Figure 12.   Explanation of Terms for Possible Taliban Geographic Aims[124]

Thus the saying that "all politics are local" holds true as the Taliban must gain and maintain support at home before pursuing longer term support of Al Qaeda global operations.

Regardless of the Taliban's future intentions, their strategy in Afghanistan is ominous and illusive. They continue to adapt and adjust to the efforts of the Coalition and their environment. Major Ecklund best described the Taliban and their flexibility using the analogy of a rock in a stream. The Taliban "are flexible like flowing water, not tied to anything, while ISAF is more inflexible, like rocks in the stream, that the flowing stream is able to go around and dominate in the long run."[125] The Taliban's strategy continues to change as they constantly evaluate their environment and output. Their strategic adaptation process is further explored in Chapter VI.

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[124] Modified from *Muslim Distribution;* Perry Castaneda Library Map Collection; University of Texas, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world_maps/muslim_distribution.jpg (accessed April 11, 2008).

[125] Marshall Ecklund, Major, U.S. Special Forces. Interview by authors; written notes. Tampa, FL; November 13, 2007. MAJ Ecklund, a graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School.

G.   CONCLUSION

The principles of war do not change. As Sun Tzu stated, "one must know their enemy." This chapter described twelve factors or inputs that directly or indirectly shape the composition and conduct of the Taliban. Understanding these inputs is paramount for coalition governments and militaries fighting against this dynamic and adaptable enemy. Research, interviews, the authors' survey and personal experience indicate that the most important inputs influencing the Taliban are culture, religion, human terrain, and concerted efforts of coalition forces and their governments. As the thesis develops, these inputs are used to build a coherent strategy to counter the Taliban's strengths and exploit their weaknesses.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THE TALIBAN

> The organizational architecture is really that a centipede walks on hundred legs and one or two don't count. So if I lose one or two legs, the process will go on, the organization will go on, the growth will go on.[126]
> — Mukesh Ambani

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the structure of the Taliban. It provides a snapshot of the Taliban's perceived layout and mechanisms, as well as its leadership, human resources and decision-making processes. The discussion is based on the four key elements of the congruence model: formal organization, informal organization, work, and people (human resources). These four elements intermingle to give a characteristic shape to the Taliban organization. Due to the limited availability of open-source material, much of the emphasis is placed on inferences from known facts and events. Aside from open source articles and news reports, a significant amount of information in this section is derived from the authors' personal experiences and observations during field deployments in the Pak-Afghan border regions between 2003 and 2006, as well as unclassified interviews and surveys with decision makers and operatives in the field.

B. FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATION[127]

The Taliban organization has constantly evolved to adjust to its environments and operational requirements since its inception in 1994. Its organizational characteristics vary by level in the hierarchy. Because of the group's covert nature and intermingling with the local culture, religion, social networks, and insurgent activities, it is almost

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126 Mukesh Ambani, as quoted in "After Quotes: Famous Mukesh Ambani Quotes," After Quotes, http://www.afterquotes.com/great/people/mukesh-ambani/index.htm (accessed April 10, 2008).

127 Formal organization is defined by an established, clear and permanent set of structures, rules and procedures. The informal organization is the cumulative set of intertwined social structure that defines how people actually work together and how their loyalties to their colleagues and the organization are organized. For more details see John Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," University of Chicago, http://ssr1.uchicago.edu/PRELIMS/Orgs/orgs2.html (accessed February 1, 2008).

impossible to draw a dividing line between its formal and informal organization. Prior to 9/11, the Taliban operated in a very rigid and extremely centralized manner at the top and middle level of an organization micro-managed by Mullah Omar.[128] Since the commencement of OEF, the Taliban organization has apparently become flatter, with more and more independence given to local commanders, in order to adapt to the demands of a complex insurgent movement and draw benefits from dispersed small units.[129] Despite this, the core of the Taliban movement maintains a somewhat hierarchical structure with centralized decision-making and decentralized execution. Broadly speaking, the Taliban is rather similar to the Mao's model of a rural movement,[130] based on social networks in the Pashtun countryside. During the course of research, the authors developed a broad organizational diagram of key Taliban components based on open source media reporting as depicted below.
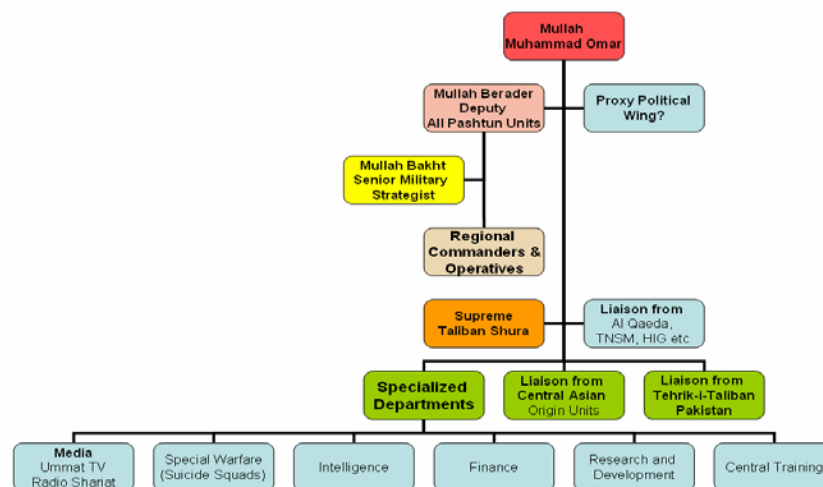
Figure 13.   A Visualized Organizational Diagram of the Taliban[131]

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128 Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 102.

129 "Taliban," Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, Jane's Information Group, http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/ (accessed December 1, 2007).

130 M. Chris Mason, Lecture: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, August 2007.

131 The tree was developed with information from various open source documents, including Victor Korgun, "Afghanistan's Resurgent Taliban," *Terrorism Focus* 1, no. 4 (October 24, 2003), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=23404 (accessed May 12, 2007). and Rahimullah Yusufzai, "Omar Names Council to Resist Occupation," *The News* June 24, 2003.

As shown in Figure 13 above, the Taliban are apparently structured into a centralized core pool of specialized departments and fighting forces organized and controlled by regional commanders. Specialized functional departments exist at other tiers of organization as well; the common ones include suicide squads trained and directed at the middle tier and above, media outlets that put out coordinated information operations like *Ummat Studios* and *Radio Shariat*, and specialized training outfits imparting technical skills to develop IEDs, suicide bombers, etc. Some of these functional departments provide a centralized pool for special skills that are dished out to the regional and local commanders as the need arises. There is some informal coordination and sharing of resources with other like-minded organizations such as Al Qaeda and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami (HiG).[132] Some of this coordination comes from sharing similar tribal and clan networks that provide access to weapons and material besides common social background of various operatives. Some media reports suggest that the Taliban may also have a proxy political wing, i.e. political leaders in the constitutional bodies within the IROA with known or covert Taliban links that give the Taliban a chance to influence the political system.[133]

It is interesting to note the status of the Taliban elements in Pakistan within the overall Taliban organization. Traditionally the Taliban elements in Pakistan never formed an integral part of the Afghan Taliban organization and retained their distinctive identity under various groups despite sharing the ideals.[134] Some of these groups recently joined hands under Baitullah Mehsud to form Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan(TeTP) whose leader vowed an oath of allegiance to Mullah Omar.[135]   However, recently the Taliban

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132 Daan Van Der Schriek, "Weaker but Not Wiser: The Taliban Today," *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 1 (January 13, 2005), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369093 (accessed March 11, 2008).

133 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "A Political Curtain-Raiser for the Taliban," *Asia Times* (2007), http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IB03Df01.html (accessed February 1, 2008).

134 Hasan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 2 (January 2008), 1, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/ (accessed January 17, 2008).

135 Roggio.

leadership in Afghanistan distanced itself from the activities and objectives of Mehsud, saying that despite ideological alignment, the Taliban in Afghanistan did not necessarily share the objectives of the TeTP.[136]

The regional level organization is similar to the top tier's, with a regional commander directing a number of local cells and controlling some centralized resources and expertise. The exact configuration of these "specialized departments" may vary from region to region due to the resources available to a particular regional commander and his overall status within the Taliban organization.

At the local level, the Taliban organization is best described as a network of franchises. The franchise structure fits well with the tribal traditions and nuances. Apart from ideologically motivated cadres, small militant bands sprout up in the countryside based on social networks with objectives that are sometimes in harmony with the Taliban's objectives.[137] These groups align themselves with Taliban and get permission to use the Taliban "trademark" for their local aims, in return for support and cooperation while agreeing to abide by the Taliban's strategic directions. However, these groups "can not merely be a criminal gang and have to be sufficiently motivated and ideologically 'correct' to be accepted into the fold of the Taliban."[138] The new cell is expected to behave in accordance with the Taliban grand strategy while retaining local freedom of action. This modus operandi merges the interests of both parties while preserving sensitivities about tribal loyalties and territorial boundaries.

A typical Taliban village cell (or "franchise") comprises ten to fifty individuals who are generally part-time fighters. They are mostly local with a smattering of ideologically motivated persons and mercenaries from other areas. The cell runs its own intelligence collection, logistics, and population control activities with coordination and support from similar cells and local Taliban leaders. The cell configuration varies

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136 "Afghan Taliban Distance Themselves from Baitullah," Pajhwok Afghan News, http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=49240 (accessed February 1, 2008).

137 Mark Miller, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Special Forces, Interview by authors. Written notes. Fort Bragg , NC, November 16, 2007.

138 Kevin Stone, Senior Analyst, National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC), Interview by authors. Written notes. Charlottesville, VA, November 19, 2007.

according to its environment and roles. As shown in Figure 14 below, the cell conducts most tasks independently but has a reciprocal relationship with other Taliban cells in the area for physical and intelligence support; sequential interdependence for processing of information (couriers, passage of equipment and sometimes finances); and pooled interdependence on higher levels in the hierarchy for media operations, IED making, technical intelligence collection, specialized training and additional financial support.
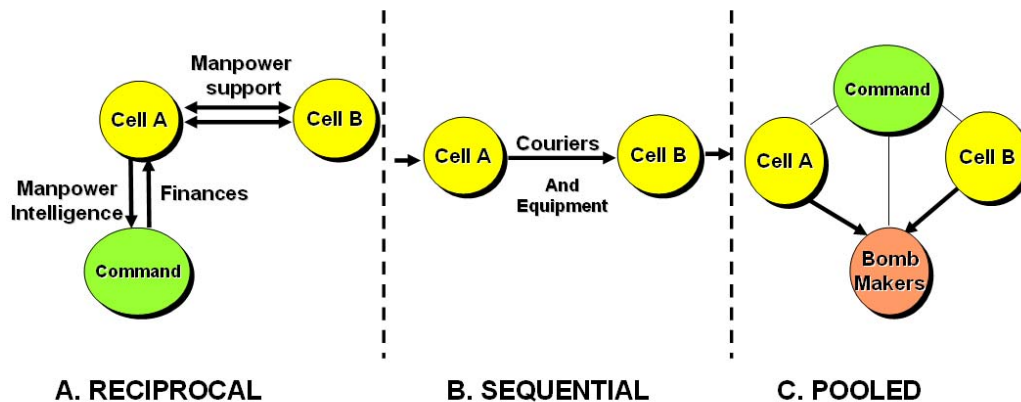
Figure 14. Forms of Interdependence in the Taliban Organization

C. LEADERSHIP

The Taliban acknowledge the central leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar and thus far there is no known attempt to question his headship. He holds a charismatic leadership position after donning the Prophet Muhammad's cloak and proclaiming himself "leader of the faithful" early in his reign.[139]

Mullah Omar is assisted by the Supreme *Shura*, the highest Taliban ruling body. The Taliban's version of a board of governors, it supposedly consists of twelve members and three advisors.[140] Different members of the *Shura* are sometimes assigned specific consultation or field command roles in addition to their position in the *Shura*. For example, before his death in 2007, Mullah Dadullah was assigned direct military

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139 Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan.*

140 Matt DuPee and Haroon Azizpour, "Blood in the Snow: The Taliban's 'Winter Offensive'," *Afgha: Afghanistan News,* December 7, 2006, http://www.afgha.com/?q=node/1589 (accessed April 11, 2007).

responsibilities. The members of the original *Shura* in 2003 reportedly included Jalaluddin Haqqani, Saifur Rahman Mansoor, Mullah Dadullah (replaced by Mullah Bakht[141]), Akhtar Osmani, Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, Mullah Obaidullah, Hafiz Abdul Majeed, Mullah Mohammad Rasul, Mullah Berader and Mullah Abdur Razzaq Akhundzada.[142] Most of these names appear as regional Taliban commanders as well, thereby giving the Shura the look of a council of field commanders as well as a board of governors. There have been significant and unconfirmed changes in the original list since the death and capture of a number of its members.

At regional and local levels, leadership roles sometimes become ambiguous as leaders struggle for personal influence. Of late, the central Taliban leadership has supposedly instituted an official leader recognition process in which a leader is designated for a region with described geographical and tribal boundaries and an elaborate command structure to coordinate and control operations.[143] However, most of the regional and local leaders emerge in " a manner typical of Pashtun tribal history—rise of charismatic persons within a social network who are able to exercise some clout and then get affiliated with the Taliban for further advancement."[144] These regional Taliban commanders have elements organized into sub-commands along territorial or tribal boundaries, as well as functional divisions similar to the top tier of the organization. An approximate representation of some of known regional commanders of the Taliban is shown in Figure 15 below.

Taliban organizational structure, signatures, and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) vary in different regions due to local environments. For example, in Eastern Afghanistan, the Taliban are mainly based on the tribal networks intermingled with elements of HiG and Haqqani Network with some Arab influence in Nuristan. In the South, and especially in Helmand and Oruzgan, they are more closely tied to the

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141 Matt Dupee, "Analysis: Taliban Replace Dadullah, the State of the Insurgency," *Afgha: Afghanistan News,* May 15, 2007, http://www.afgha.com/?q=node/2947 (accessed May 18, 2007).

142 Yusufzai, *Omar Names Council to Resist Occupation.*

143 Korgun.

144 Miller. The same phenomenon is described by Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, 71.

narcotics and smuggling gangs that thrive on opium production.[145] The Taliban in Northern and Western Afghanistan are still not very well organized or effective because of ineffective local support, but they are slowly growing in an attempt to expand northwards. [146]
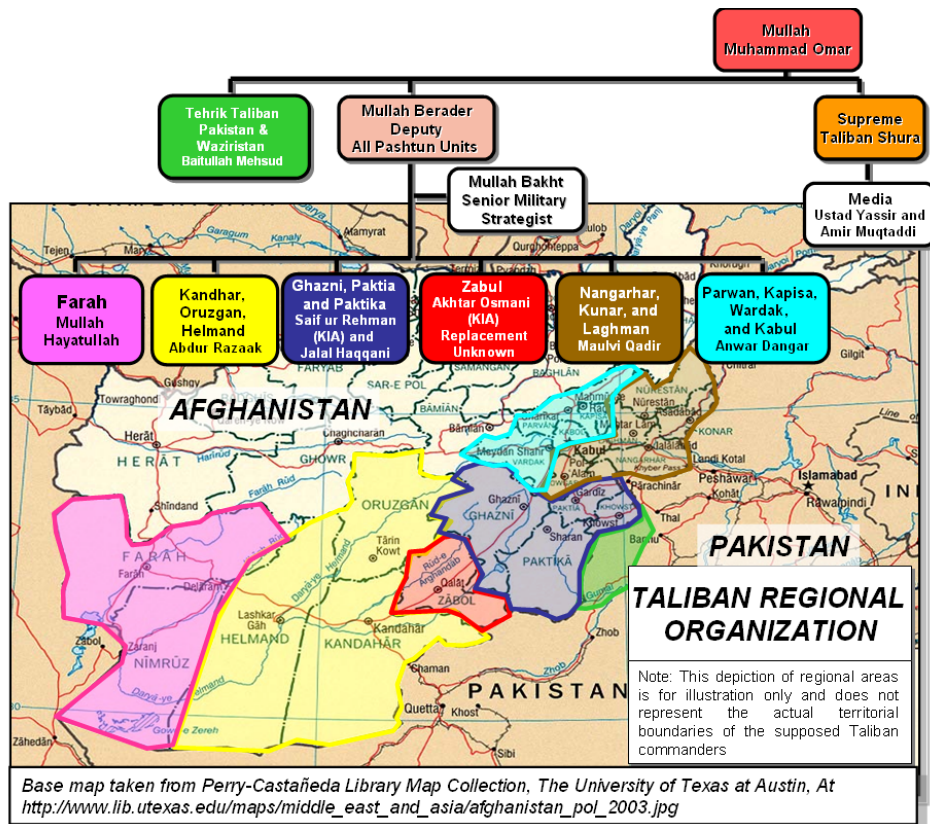
Figure 15.   Perceived Regional Taliban Leadership[147]

D.   DECISION MAKING

Decision making within Taliban is a mix of Directive Control (broad, general guidance from the top and decentralized execution), Consultative Control (decisions based on consensus among leaders), and Autocratic Control (issuing strict orders with

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145 Brandon Griffin, Captain, U.S. Special Forces, Interview by authors. Written notes. Fort Bragg , NC, November 16, 2007.

146 Waliullah Rahmani, "Farah Province: The New Focus of the Taliban Insurgency," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 23 (December 10, 2007), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373844 (accessed April 10, 2008).

147 Derived mainly from Korgun.

specific details for execution). According to Admiral Cox, former Commander of the Joint Intelligence Center at U.S. Central Command,

> In most part, the decision-making is localized. Most of the Taliban members are   local with smaller groups moving between different areas. Day to day decision   making is normally done at tribal or local level. The system looks autocratic from outside at the top level but further down the chain, the locals decide what to do.[148]

Mullah Omar was known initially for micromanagement; however, he has gradually adopted a more directive style of leadership due to the operational environment that requires more decentralized execution. The middle tier leaders are more informal and generally rely on consensus in a *jirga* style meeting. The decision is generally, but not always, vetted through the clergy and tribal elders to elicit popular support. However, for tactical purposes, most short-term decisions are given at the spur of the moment, without consultation.

In the authors' survey, most respondents considered the decision making process to be biased towards a directive control mechanism at the strategic level, consultation oriented at the operational level, and autocratic at the tactical level, as shown in Figure 1 above.
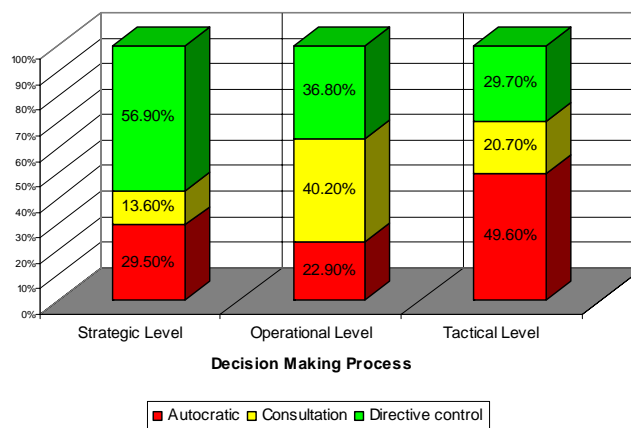
Figure 16.   Perceptions about Decision Making Process in the Taliban

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148 Cox.

E.   COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Taliban insurgency is a decentralized and loosely run affair. For the Directive Control mechanism, Mullah Omar and the Supreme *Shura* carry out strategic planning and issue overall directives to the regional commanders. These directives are disseminated downwards to village cells in the form of a *fatwa* or decree. The village cell acts in a semi-independent manner with minimum control from above. The cell leader plans and conducts his activities according to the regional situation, considering incentives or dangers for his own group while aiming for alignment with overall policy.

The regional or local Taliban leader's span of control depends on the nature of the task. For routine tasks, the linkages and reporting relationships resemble a traditional hierarchical pyramid where information is passed up and down along a vertical line (Figure 17 A). However, when a coordinated operation is required, network features of the organization come into play and information and support are passed horizontally, vertically or diagonally (Figure 17 B). The speed of information sharing is remarkable and not restricted by the disruption of a few communication channels, thus enabling the Taliban to adopt swarming tactics for their operations.[149]   The very rare exceptions are cells operating near traditionally hostile tribes where a normal vertical bureaucracy is followed.

A. Typical Reporting and Direction For Policy Decisions

B. Reporting and Direction For Conduct of Coordinated Operations
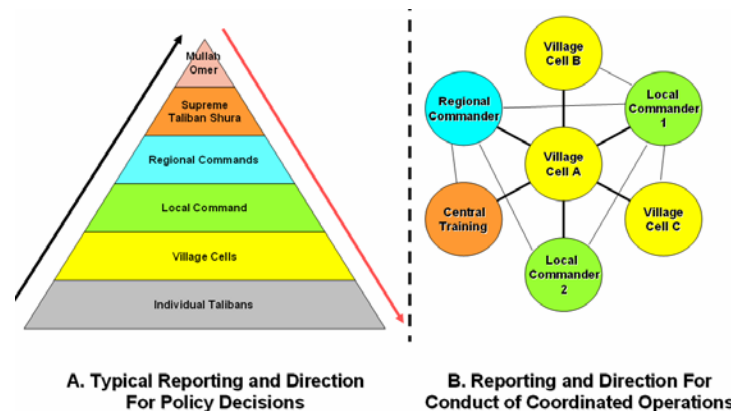
Figure 17.   Linkages, Coordination and Reporting Mechanisms

149 For details of swarming tactics see John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Swarming and the Future of Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2005), http://www.rand.org/pubs/documented_briefings/2005/RAND_DB311.pdf (accessed December 11, 2007).

Couriers are used to relay sensitive verbal or written messages.[150] The courier network relies on tribal linkages and loyalties for speed and security. The Taliban also utilize short-range radios for tactical communications with an extensive code system. Lately, Taliban cells are using the internet to communicate within the settled areas and for propaganda purposes.[151] Another form of communication is the use of *Shabnamah* (night letters) which are "declarations of intent" normally used for population control.[152] These night letters are probably the most widespread form of Taliban messaging along with word of mouth (rumors), as highlighted in a recent survey conducted by Altai Consulting (Figure 18 below). This phenomenon illustrates that the Taliban does not need to be physically present to reach out and influence the populace.

"What Form is the Taliban Presence In?"

Form	Percentage
Leaflets & Night Letters	18%
Physical Presence	8%
Rumors of Presence	10%
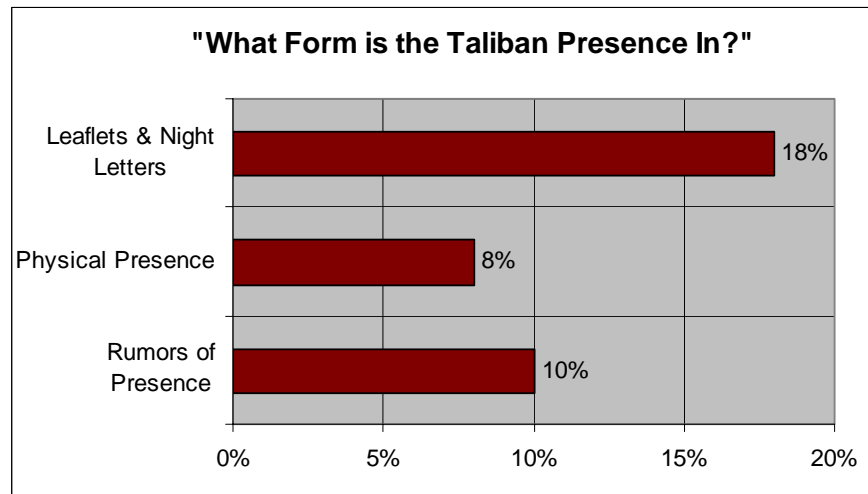
Figure 18.   Forms of Taliban Presence in the Afghan Countryside[153]

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150 Mullah Dadullah, in an interview with the BBC's Pashtu service in March 2003, said of Mullah Omar, "We have appointed leaders and commanders based on his handwritten letter; we have started jihad based on his handwritten letter, and we work based on his orders. *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2006), http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/4565e7fe4.pdf (accessed April 11, 2007).

151 Tim Foxley, "The Taliban's Propaganda Activities," (Stockholm: SIPRI, June 2007), 6-7, http://www.sipri.org/contents/conflict/foxley_paper.pdf (accessed May 1, 2008).

152 For details see Thomas H. Johnson, "The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters)," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (September 2007), 317-344.

153 *Altai Consulting Survey - CEE: Cognitive Effects Evaluation* (Kabul: Altai Consulting [2007]), http://www.altaiconsulting.com/work_ns.php (accessed November 23, 2007). The survey respondents are a mix of Afghan civilians from different Pashtun provinces.

F.   THE PEOPLE

The Taliban have an interesting human resource process, deeply rooted and in harmony with the local culture and ethnic nuances, that sometimes makes it difficult to separate members' tribal and the organizational affinities. This section describes different elements of this paradigm.

1.   Recruitment and Training

The Taliban does not have a formal recruitment mechanism. New recruits are generally drawn from two main channels: 1) students of certain pro-Taliban *madrassas*, and 2) local tribal youth recruited based on glamour, desire for revenge, frustration with the government, financial incentives, and religious sentiments. The Altai CEE Survey (Figure 19 below) illuminates the reasons for Taliban recruitment, showing that religious ideology is a lower priority for recruitment than many suspect.
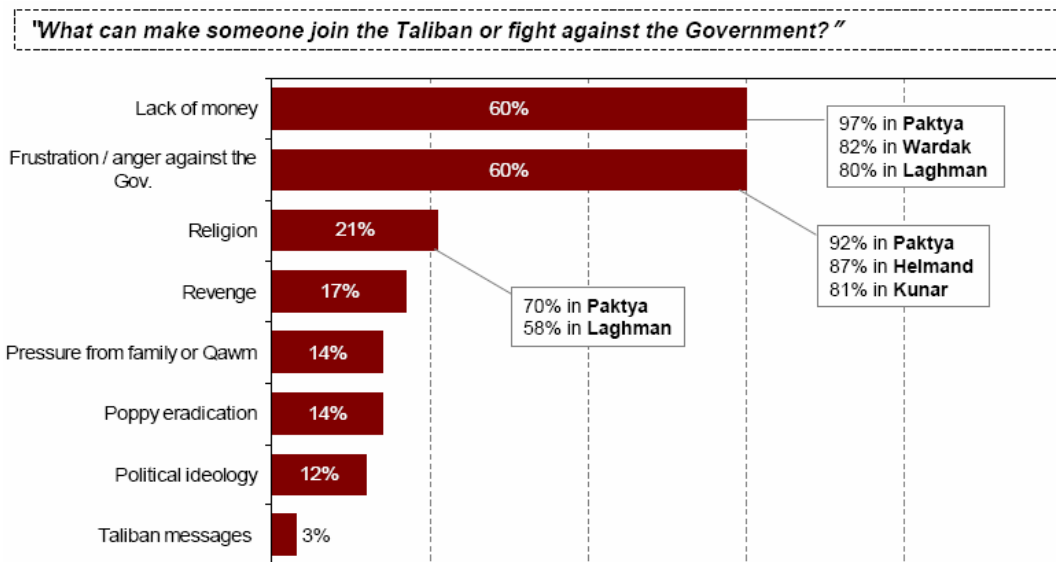
Figure 19.   Possible Recruitment Motivators for the Taliban Foot Soldiers[154]

154 *Altai Consulting Survey - CEE: Cognitive Effects Evaluation* (Kabul: Altai Consulting [2007]), http://www.altaiconsulting.com/work_ns.php (accessed November 23, 2007).

The local cell generally acts as the hub for recruitment based on family and clan loyalties, tribal lineage, personal friendships and social networks, *madrassa* alumni circles and shared interests. This social movement approach to recruitment enables whole personal networks to be used for the organization's benefits, as

> The best way to organize a social movement is not to recruit individuals but to recruit leaders and groups, as undertaken by the Taliban. Irrespective of the initial motivations, the perceptions of the new members change to become more aligned with the organization once they get in.[155]

The feeling of *badal* or revenge as a response to collateral damage suffered by innocent Afghans prompts an influx in recruitment. The frequent use of small numbers of Taliban fighters as bait to induce massive strikes in a village from the U.S. and NATO forces boosts Taliban recruiting.[156]

Recruits generally have basic military skills because of the very nature of the Pashtun tribal society where everyone is always armed. Recruits receive significant on-the-job training and have to prove their military ability within a 'peer review system' typical of Pashtun tribal structure. Those considered brave, intelligent, pious, and politically sound generally gain prominence within a cell and soon either assume leadership of the cell or form a new cell of their own.

2. Motivation

The Taliban are very successful in achieving goal-congruence among members' personal motivations, group interests, and the objectives of the organization. The motivations of the Taliban can be divided into two main groups, as described by Jones.

> The top tier comprises the Taliban leadership structure and key commanders. These men are motivated by their interpretation [of] radical Islam, and see the insurgency as a fight with Western infidels, and the West's "puppet government" in Kabul. The bottom tier includes thousands of local fighters and their support network. These are primarily young men from rural villages who are paid to set up roadside bombs, launch rockets,

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155 Doug Perkins, Pakistan Analyst, National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC), Interview by authors. Written notes. Charlottesville, VA; November 19, 2007.

156 Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, 71

and mortars at NATO and Afghan forces, or pick up a gun for a few days. Most are not ideologically committed to *jihad*. Rather, they are motivated because they are unemployed, disenchanted with the lack of change since 2001, or angry because a local villager was killed or wounded by Afghan, U.S. or NATO forces.[157]

Because they identify their struggle as a defense of Islamic values and Pashtun culture, the motivations of the top Taliban leadership can be identified using a mixture of the Cosmic War[158] and Fundamentalism[159] paradigms as they define their struggle to be in the defense of their own version of Islamic values and Pashtun culture. The leadership seeks to realize a form of Islam that they believe to be pure and, according to them, based on the earliest understandings of the faith. The rank and file, on the other hand, are more like a social movement that wants to challenge the political status quo and economic deprivation; hence, their motivation can be best understood in the context of Social Movement Theory.[160] However, after carrying out the bulk of recruitment using the social movement mechanisms,

> the personal motivation at local level is harnessed by the Taliban leadership to   their own advantage. Once you get in, other organizational pressures take over and keep the members streamlined to the overall ideology. It is like a cult, which changes your outlook after you get inside it.[161]

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157 Seth G. Jones, *Afghanistan's Local Insurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 2007), http://www.rand.org/commentary/013107IHT.html.

158 The Cosmic War defines the perception by violent religious groups of an eternal battle of good versus evil in the real world. The signs of Cosmic War include use of extreme violence, use of binary rhetoric, refusal to compromise, use of supernatural metaphors, and consideration of the struggle as defense of basic identity. For details of Cosmic War Theory, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2003), 149.

159 Fundamentalism calls for a "return" to the actual or imagined origins. It is a reaction to a real or perceived threat to religion or culture. For details of Fundamentalism Theory see Gabriel Abraham Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion : The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 93.

160 Social Movements are groups mobilizing to change the status quo in society, governments, or policies. For details see Christian Smith, "Introduction: Correcting a Curious Neglect, Or Bringing Religion Back in" In *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Action* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.

161 Stone.

The Taliban persuade their ranks to act in accordance with the organization's wishes by offering monetary rewards for the people driven by money, status for the people seeking power, and glamour for the adventurous by glorifying them in tribal society. They also punish people found wanting. Punishments include withholding finances, reduction in status, physical violence aimed at the individual or his kinfolk, and alienation from the tribal community. Taliban also have a loosely defined arrangement for discipline that the fighters and commanders are expected to follow. In December 2007, they issued a codex or code of conduct (*Layeha*) for communicating the organization's rules to its members.[162] The central leadership can disown a member or commander for any significant violation of the rules as demonstrated recently by the sacking of Mullah Mansoor Dadullah.[163]

G.   THE WORK (OPERATIONS)

The Taliban work methods are a mixture of Mujahideen (*dukhi)* tactics inherited from the Russo-Afghan War and recent Iraqi insurgent innovations carried across borders.[164] They exhibit a definite Al Qaeda training signature in their TTPs and overall methodology and are becoming more sophisticated with time. For kinetic operations, their methods are typical of a rural guerilla insurgency with varying results. Respondents to the authors' survey rated the effectiveness of various Taliban TTPs as depicted in Figure 20 below. However, the study will not discuss further details of the TTPs as these are beyond the scope of this research.

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162 "Jihadi Layeha- A Comment," National Center for Policy Research, http://www.ncpr.af/Publications/LayehaJihad.pdf (accessed May 11, 2007).

163 "Taleban Sack Military Commander," BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7164277.stm (accessed January 2, 2008).

164 Mason, *Lecture: Insurgency and Counterinsurgency.*

Effectiveness of Taliban TTPs
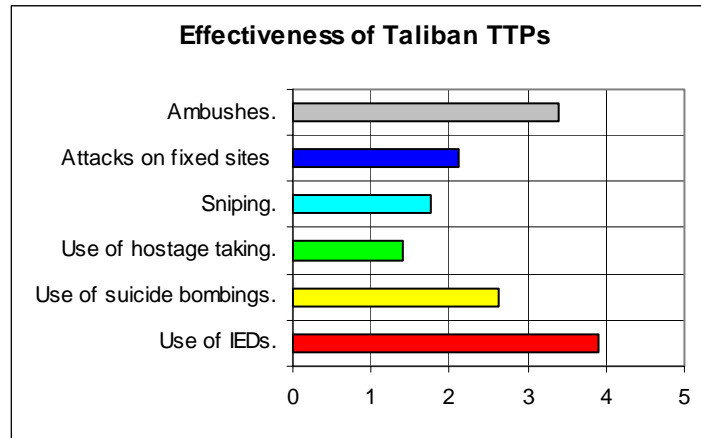
Figure 20.   Perceived Effectiveness of Different Taliban TTPs

Despite their obvious effectiveness in kinetic operations, the major routine work objective of the Taliban is aimed at population control. For this purpose, two major approaches can be identified: the "Robin Hood" method and the "bullies."[165] The Robin Hoods generally champion the genuine and perceived concerns of the local populace, providing security and speedy justice according to tribal norms and thereby gaining local support. The Robin Hoods also stir up local sentiments in their favor by a very effective Information Operations (IO) campaign maligning the Coalition forces' actions, in particular the collateral damage. The bullies, on the other hand, use the strength of their gangs and massive intimidation to commandeer local loyalties. Because there is no permanent Coalition presence in most areas,[166] the local population is forced to accept the Taliban presence and support their activities to secure safety. In most instances, the Taliban groups use a combination of methods as required.

H.   CONCLUSION

The organization structure of the Taliban is optimized to achieve congruence between their environments, strategic objectives, resources, and limitations. The understanding of their structure, as described in this chapter, provides a basis for

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165 Miller.

166 One fifth of the respondents to a recent survey in Afghanistan never saw Coalition Forces in their areas. See *Altai Consulting Survey - CEE: Cognitive Effects Evaluation*, 99 . The survey was conducted only in areas considered "safe" for the survey team.

evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in comparison to the Coalition forces' strategies. To this end, Chapter V describes the Coalition COIN strategies adopted so far on both sides of the border in context of the current problem.

V.   COALITION COIN STRATEGIES

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat. — Sun Tzu[167]

A.   INTRODUCTION

Chapter IV outlines the perceived organizational structure of the Taliban, as it exists today. This chapter describes the counterinsurgency strategies adopted by the Coalition Forces on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. This description is prerequisite to discussion of the positive and negative effects on the Taliban in Chapter VI, which allows assessment of the Taliban's strengths, weaknesses and potential for transformation. As with in the previous chapter, due to limited materials on the subject, much of the information presented is based on open source media reports and unclassified interviews with various Coalition decision makers and field operatives.

B.   THE PAKISTANI STRATEGY

The United States was not the only casualty of 9/11. The attacks hit Pakistan differently, but with equally savage force.

— President of Pakistan, General (Ret) Pervez Musharraf[168]

1.   Background of the Problem

The Pakistani security forces have been dealing with the menace of the Taliban and their sympathizers mostly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan since 2001. With an estimated population of 3.18 to 5.7 million, and an area of 27,220 square kilometers (over 3.4 percent of Pakistan's land area), these territories comprise a vast swathe of land along the sensitive and geographically rough Pakistan-

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[167] "Sun Tzu Quotes," Think Exist, http://thinkexist.com/quotation/strategy_without_tactics_is_the_slowest_route_to/220091.html (accessed March 21, 2007).

[168] Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 222.

Afghan border. [169] The area includes seven tribal agencies and six Frontier Regions (FRs) (See Figure 21 below). A number of tribes straddle the border, and almost all maintain strong ethnic and cultural links with their Pashtun cousins across it. The tribal areas joined Pakistan in 1947 through an agreement between the Pakistani government and the tribal elders.[170] Pakistan assured a continuation of the accords already in place between the tribes and the British Government, including their semi-autonomous status and Easement Rights (access across the border to the divided tribes).[171] To that end, the constitution of Pakistan included provisions in Articles 246 and 247 giving a special status to the tribal areas.[172]

Figure 21.   Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan and Frontier Regions[173]

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[169] The official figure for FATA population is 3.17 million, while unofficial sources claim it to be much higher. *Population Demography of FATA*, Vol. 2007.

[170] Caroe, 435.

[171] Noor ul Haq, Rashid Ahmed Khan and Maqsood ul Hasan Nuri, "Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan."

[172] *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*, and Humayun Khan, "The Role of the Federal Government and the Political Agent" In *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Response*, eds. Maqsood ul Hasan Nuri and Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2005), 105.

[173] Map taken from *FATA Sustainable Development Plan (2006-2015)* (Peshawar, Pakistan: FATA Secretariat; Government of Pakistan, 2006), http://www.fata.gov.pk/subpages/downloads.php (accessed February 27, 2008).

Historically, elders or *maliks* had a dominant role in the tribal society.[174] However, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, changing economic situation, rise of dissatisfied youth groups, and founding of radical *madrassahs* have increased the influence of politico-religious organizations and challenged the *riwaj*[175] and the authority of *maliks* thereby dividing the tribal society between the power centers of the mullahs, the youth, and the *maliks*.[176] Contrary to popular perception, it was not official Pakistani policy at the time to reduce effectiveness of *maliks* for allegedly increasing the mujahideen recruitment. Nonetheless, Pakistani and U.S. support to mujahideen groups based in FATA did eventually have the same unintended consequence, as the tribal mujahideen gained advanced weaponry and mullahs increased in influence with the opening of a large number of foreign funded madrassahs.[177]

Economically, the FATA are some of the least developed areas of the country. Almost 60 percent of FATA households are below the poverty line.[178] The region has a literacy rate of only 17.4 percent, much lower than the national average of 45 percent, and there is only one doctor per 7670 people.[179] There are very limited economic opportunities in the area with the exception of traditional cattle herding, crude forestry and limited mineral exploration.[180]

After the Soviet invasion in 1979, an unusual interest attached to the FATA when these areas became the launch pad for mujahideen in Afghanistan. [181] The influx of Afghan refugees, spread of militant culture, continuing civil war in Afghanistan, and rise

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[174] Caroe, 400.

[175] *Riwaj* literally means "the traditions" and implies the unwritten code of rules governing the Pashtun tribal society.

[176] Hamid Khan, Lieutenant General, (ex Commander 11 Corps); *FATA and GWOT;* Lecture at Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA; Written Notes, January 24, 2008.

[177] Khan, *FATA and GWOT.*

[178] "ADB Preparing Project to Develop Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan," Asian Development Bank, http://www.adb.org/media/Articles/2004/4379_Pakistan_develop_FATA/.

[179] "Socio Economic Indicators," FATA Secretariat, Government of NWFP, http://www.fata.gov.pk/index.php?link=9 (accessed September 1, 2007).

[180] *FATA Sustainable Development Plan (2006-2015)*, xiii.

[181] Mumtaz Ali Bangash, "The Political and Administrative Development of Tribal Areas" (Ph D, Area Study Centre Central Asia, University of Peshawar), 77.

of the Taliban did much to aggravate the situation. It led to an altered ethnic balance, weapons proliferation, inflow of narcotics, extremism, and increased disorder,[182] along with undermining of traditional tribal structures.

Following the U.S. led invasion in Afghanistan, the tribal areas once again came into focus, as a number of militants found refuge in these areas with their local sympathizers using the Pashtunwali tenet of *melmastia* (hospitality). The Pakistani government thereby decided to launch a cleanup operation in the tribal areas, Operation Almizan. The main adversaries of the Pakistani security forces in this effort fall into three broad categories: Arabs, Central Asians, and local and Afghan members of the Taliban and their sympathizers. The Arabs are mostly a mix of mujahideen veterans of the Russo-Afghan War and new members of Al Qaeda networks. The Central Asians and Uighur Chinese operate under their own umbrella organizations like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan led by Qari Tohir Yuldashev and Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement under Hassan Masoom.[183] The FATA locals and Afghan refugees sympathetic to the Taliban cause initially organized themselves loosely along tribal lines. However, these outfits recently merged under the unified banner of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan[184] with an ambiguous relationship with the Taliban movement in Afghanistan.[185]

The peculiar geography, history, administrative arrangements, and ethno-cultural nuances of the tribal areas posed a host of unique problems for the Pakistani government, which undertook various strategies to restore order, with varying results. Currently, Pakistan has around 112,000 troops deployed to the region[186] and has lost the lives of over 1045

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[182] Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, Understanding FATA; Attitudes Towards Governance, Religion and Society in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Survey)Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme (CAMP), 2008), http://www.camp.org.pk (accessed March 28, 2008).

[183] Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Part 1: The Legacy of Nek Mohammed," *Asia Times* (2004), http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/FG20Df05.html (accessed September 1, 2007). . Hassan Masoom was later on killed in Operation Baghar China as described in Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, 267, 267.

[184] Roggio.

[185] According to some media reports, Mullah Omar has distanced himself from the avowed objectives of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan while maintaining organizational and ideological linkages. For details see: "Afghan Taliban Distance Themselves from Baitullah," Pajhwok Afghan News, http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=49240 (accessed February 1, 2008).

[186] Khan, *FATA and GWOT.*

soldiers in operations there, with another 2471 wounded in action as of January 2008.[187] This is reputedly the largest number of casualties suffered by any one nation in OEF. There have also been an even greater number of civilian casualties resulting from terrorist acts throughout the country. The next section discusses these strategies and their transformation.

2. Transformation of the Pakistani Strategy

The initial aims of the Operation Almizan were twofold: to counter border crossings and infiltration by terrorists and militants, and the elimination of any possible terrorist hideouts in FATA in order to re-establish the writ of the Pakistani government.[188] The initial phase of Operation Almizan was synchronous with the Coalition Forces' operations in December 2001. Because of tribal sensitivities and the peculiar status of the FATA, the Pakistani security forces moved into FATA only after negotiating with tribal elders. The tribal elders assured the Commander of 11th Corps that they "would allow access to Pakistan Army and local scouts to the hitherto inaccessible tribal areas and seize and handover any suspects."[189] To make the deal lucrative for the tribes, the government promised infrastructure and other development programs initially worth at least U.S. $20 million.[190] The deal generally resulted in a successful outcome except in the administrative districts (called agencies) of South Waziristan (SWA) and North Waziristan (NWA), where the traditional influence of tribal elders had deteriorated for reasons already mentioned. Initially, groups of the Frontier Corps[191] and Army deployed along the border mountain passes and captured 240 Al Qaeda operatives

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[187] Khan, *FATA and GWOT.*

[188] Ibid.

[189] Rahimullah Yousufzai, as quoted in Matthew W. Williams, "The British Colonial Experience in Waziristan and its Applicability to Current Operations" School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2005 .

[190] Intikhab Amir as quoted in Williams.

[191] The Frontier Corps is a paramilitary force stationed in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Balochistan Province. While operating under the Federal Ministry of Interior, it is responsible for law enforcement in tribal areas and border security. For details see "Frontier Corps," Pakistan Military Consortium, http://www.pakdef.info/forum/showthread.php?t=5300 , (accessed January 11, 2008).

representing 26 nationalities in the first month.[192] During this stage, due to the army's commitment on the eastern border and lack of adequate intelligence, a number of militants were able to sneak across the border and found refuge with sympathetic tribes. To counter the problem, a Pakistani infantry brigade entered Tirah Valley in July 2002, and followed by another brigade in the North and South Waziristan agencies. In this phase, the army mainly concentrated on conducting cordon and search operations for Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives, based again on sketchy intelligence. During these operations, the security forces suffered significant losses (e.g. in Operation Kazha Punga[193]) but did succeed in capturing some key Al Qaeda and Taliban operatives.

A major change in Pakistani strategy occurred in mid-March 2004, when a search operation at Kalosha in South Waziristan met stiff resistance from the "miscreants."[194] Sixty-four soldiers lost their lives and 58 were severely injured over a period of five days, while 68 militants were killed and 163 captured.[195] After Kalosha, the security forces decided to launch extensive sweep operations to create "Terrorist Free Zones," to expand them further, and then to deploy small outposts throughout the area by inducting around 80,000 troops. The main facets of the strategy included sealing the border and killing or capturing opponents in the area with large-scale operations, creating a suitable political environment and increasing development projects. The security forces temporarily achieved the upper hand, establishing outposts to counter cross-border infiltration and commencing the development works. However, the miscreants soon recovered their losses and started attacking government outposts and convoys, which led to occasional firefights and violence.

In June 2006, the Pakistani government announced a shift of strategy from purely military dominance to the cooperative integration of local tribal elders, religious leaders, and populace; the announcement led to the Miranshah Peace Accord in September 2006. According to the government, the objectives of the accord included restoring the

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[192] Musharraf, 264.

[193] Ibid., 265.

[194] The term "Miscreants" is widely used in Pakistan to describe anti-government forces and terrorists.

[195] Musharraf, 268.

dilapidated tribal structure and relying on peaceful means to establish better law and order. The government declared the policy successful for some time as the level of violence in FATA decreased significantly; however, there were some reports of the reorganization of local groups sympathetic to Taliban in NWA and SWA.

According to some observers, the alleged U.S. military operation in Bajaur in October 2006 started a fresh wave of violence throughout the area.[196] The tribal elders declared it a breach of the agreement, the local Taliban sympathizers started asserting themselves even outside the tribal regions, and a process of "Talibanisation" commenced in the districts outside FATA. The Waziristan Accord came to an end in the aftermath of Lal Masjid episode when the army, responding to a wave of suicide attacks, once again moved against suspected miscreants' hideouts in the tribal areas, Swat, and Darra Adam Khel.[197] Currently, a new wave of negotiations between the government and the tribal elders is underway for termination of the hostilities.[198]

3.   The Current Pakistani Strategy

Pakistan has a significant interest in the success of the OEF and its own operations in the FATA. The desired Pakistani end state includes preservation of Pakistani national sovereignty and unity while establishing and retaining control over its territory, eradication of extremism and terrorist networks on its soil, long term regional stability, development of good relations with Afghanistan, and fostering an enduring strategic partnership with U.S.

The Pakistani strategy in FATA has gradually shifted during the past six years, from full scale direct military action to attempted empowerment of tribal institutions

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[196] Anwarullah Khan, "82 Die as Missiles Rain on Bajaur: Pakistan Owns Up to Strike; Locals Blame U.S. Drones," *The Dawn,* October 31, 2006, http://www.dawn.com/2006/10/31/top1.htm (accessed March 21, 2008).

[197] Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) is a mosque in Islamabad. In July 2007, a standoff between the militant students barricaded inside it and the Pakistani security forces resulted in a military operation in which over twenty people were killed. For details see "Pakistan Militant Cleric Killed," *BBC*, July 10, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6288704.stm (accessed March 21, 2008).

[198] Ismail Khan, "Peace Accord Finalised with Mehsuds," *The Dawn*, April 23, 2008, http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/23/top2.htm (accessed April 24, 2008).

through negotiations. The current strategy entails use of tribal institutions to achieve control of the area and strengthen the system of governance, use of military force to seal the borders and target known miscreant training and logistic nodes in order to reestablish the writ of the state from a position of strength, and development and economic activities.[199] The commander of 11th Pakistani Corps, based in Peshawar, acts as the overall military commander of the region in charge of Operation Almizan, while the governor of NWFP heads the pillar of the strategy implemented through political agents. The next section discusses the ways and means of this strategy in the context of elements of national power, focusing on the role of military in employing these elements.

a.   *Diplomatic and Political*

"Politics govern tribal behavior in Waziristan."[200] Therefore, the political arm of strategy is now heralded as the main feature of the government's plans to stabilize the region. The ultimate aim of political arrangements is to ensure a smooth transition of the FATA into mainstream Pakistan. However, this is a slow and painstaking process and requires heeding tribal sensitivities. The first step in this long-term strategy is to strengthen traditional tribal structures of *maliks* and *jirga* in order to increase the use of tribal elders against miscreants and achieve local political solutions. The Pakistani government has declared its intention to route the new wave of development works and dialogues with the populace through the *maliks* in order to increase their influence and importance.[201] It expects that the *maliks* will eventually reassert their traditional role and thus help the government implement its strategy. According to the government, some events in South Waziristan in March 2007 did show a hopeful trend in this regard, when a portion of the Wazir tribe fought against Uzbek Al Qaeda fighters, causing significant

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[199] "Frontline: Return of the Taliban. Interview with General Pervez Musharraf." Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/interviews/musharraf.html (accessed June 1, 2007), and Khan, *FATA and GWOT.*

[200] Williams, 47.

[201] Khan, *FATA and GWOT.*

losses.[202] After the failure of 2006 Accord and ensuing violence, the government signed a new agreement with tribal elders from Waziristan in February 2008, which it hopes will be significantly more effective and enduring.[203]

With the recent success of Awami National Party (ANP) in the general elections in NWFP, it is hoped that a more politically oriented strategy will be used to deal with the situation. The ANP holds significant influence among Pashtuns and as part of its manifesto demands that political processes in the FATA should be brought up to par with the rest of Pakistan in order to stem the militancy.[204] The success of ANP over the religious parties' coalition *(Muttahidda Majlis I Amal,* known as the MMA*)* signifies a popular shift among the Pakistani Pashtuns, who opted for a more secular democratic solution. A recent survey demonstrates the same trend and claims that the people of FATA aspire to a greater political role and do not believe the religious political groups can create a better or more just society.[205]

On the diplomatic side, the government has been trying t to coordinate its operations with the Afghan, U.S. and NATO governments through high-level visits and liaisons. However, the efforts on all sides leave much to be desired, as there is an apparent lack of coordination among Coalition partners on key issues in the Pashtun belt.

b.   *Information and Intelligence Gathering*

Information operations and intelligence gathering form the second tier of the Pakistani strategy. The Pakistani government is trying to influence the opinions of the tribes against extremism by a national television and newspaper media campaign. It faces enormous difficulties in the form of a better and more aggressive information campaign

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202 Khan, *FATA and GWOT.* and Ismail Khan and Alamgir Bhittani, "42 Uzbeks among 58 Dead: Fierce Clashes in S. Waziristan," *Dawn* March 21, 2007, http://www.dawn.com/2007/03/21/top1.htm (accessed May 20, 2007).

203 Afzal Khan, "Reviving the North Waziristan Peace Accord may Stabilize Tribal Pakistan," *Terrorism Focus* 5, no. 8 (February 27, 2008), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373993 (accessed February 28, 2008).

204 Earlier, only religious political parties could operate in the region, using the guise of religious gatherings, as political gatherings and political parties were banned by the FATA rules.

205 Shinwari, 41 and 76.

run by the miscreants, and mixed popular reaction to the U.S.[206] The two main apparatus of the information campaign are the armed forces' Directorate of Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) and the Ministry of Information. While maintaining its tentacles at field headquarters level, the ISPR coordinates media access to military operations, gives out accounts of military actions in a daily press briefing as the mouthpiece of the military, and runs leaflet campaigns aimed at the local populace. It formulates media policy, safeguards against negative influences on the Armed Forces, and monitors the mass media for hostile psychological campaigns.[207] The main objectives of the information campaign as part of the overall strategy are threefold: discrediting militancy, creating support for the presence of government security forces in the area, and increasing the tribal population's sense of national identity.

Intelligence gathering is dependent mostly on the use of sparse HUMINT sources, which are extremely difficult to acquire and operate in a well-knit tribal structure where outsiders stand out like a sore thumb. Therefore, the security forces depend mainly on their own meager human assets, along with some technical intelligence from the OEF forces whose main focus is on the other side of the border. This arrangement involves bureaucratic hurdles, too, as most sensitive information cannot be shared with non-U.S.-NATO forces due to classification issues. Currently, the Pakistani forces do not have adequate technical equipment, like unmanned aerial vehicles and reconnaissance satellites, a lack lamented by President Musharraf.

> Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we were not given timely access to modern technology for intelligence gathering, surveillance, and target acquisition. Our army operations remain dependent on technical intelligence provided through U.S. resources.[208]

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[206] Arguably, a significant segment of the population considers the U.S. as an unreliable long-term ally based on actual or perceived instances of the U.S. abandonment of Pakistan in the past. For example, the U.S. banned military shipments to Pakistan during Indo Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971, when the Pakistani military relied heavily on U.S. equipment, and ceased aid to Pakistan after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. For details, see Peter R. Lavoy and Adam Radin, "U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Partnership: A Track-Two Dialogue" (Center for Contemporary Conflict, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, February 21-22, 2007), http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/May/lavoyMay07.asp (accessed May 30, 2007).

[207] "Inter Services Public Relations: About ISPR," Directorate General ISPR, http://www.ispr.gov.pk/General/about.htm (accessed May 30, 2007).

[208] Musharraf, 270.

c.   *Military*

Military actions have been a major feature of the Pakistani strategy in the FATA. While the government recognizes that military operations are not the ultimate solution, they are used to create a favorable environment for the political process.[209] Apart from monitoring the overall campaign, the primary tasks of the military in the area include the eliminating militant hideouts, sealing borders, reestablishing the writ of the state, and conducting economic activities like constructing roads, establishing schools and providing of health facilities.[210]

The security forces initially used massive military direct actions to conduct large-scale sweep operations in the tribal territory. As a result, they gained outward control of the area and neutralized any large concentrations of Taliban and Al Qaeda elements. They achieved this at the cost of significant casualties to security forces, while collateral damage caused resentment among the locals due to the Pashtunwali concept of *badal* (revenge). After a gradual shift of government strategy towards the use of tribal institutions, the security forces modified their focus to achieve better effects from their actions. Recent official figures show that the military has deployed over 112,000 troops into the area, operating around 1083 posts along the border.[211] The deployment is aimed at countering border crossing, eliminating militant influence and increasing government presence in hitherto inaccessible areas. The Pakistani government also proposes to fence the border to counter movement, but faces difficulties because of Afghan sensitivities about the Durand Line.[212] To augment its capability, new FC wings are being raised, along with better personnel training through local and foreign

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[209] Khan, *FATA and GWOT.*

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] The Durand Line is the international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan established during the British rule after an agreement between the British Indian government and the Emirate of Afghanistan. After the independence of Pakistan, Afghanistan refused to acknowledge the continued status of the Durand Line as an international border, claiming rights to the Pashtun majority areas up to Indus River. For details of the issue, see Tariq Mahmood, "The Durand Line: South Asia's New Trouble Spot" (M.A. thesis, National Security Affairs, Naval Postgraduate School), 105, http://bosun.nps.edu/uhtbin/hyperion-image.exe/05Jun%5FMahmood.pdf; http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA435574 (accessed May 30, 2007).

trainers.[213] The Pakistan Army has also created a Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) as part of its elite Special Services Group to undertake critical direct action tasks while training regular troops in counterinsurgency activities. However, it suffers from equipment shortages, a very small Special Forces capability, and the presence of a large potential threat on Pakistan's eastern borders that requires an emphasis on conventional operations in its training curriculum and equipment acquisitions.

d. Economic

The economic element of Pakistani strategy rests on providing incentives to influence the behavior of tribes and denying funding for the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The strategy aims at creating strategic effects. It includes the creation and improvement of the communication infrastructure; provision of health care, schools, and clean drinking water; help in economic ventures; payment of compensation for collateral damage; and payment of cash in return for cooperation. The Pakistan government has recently planned a nine-year, $2 billion economic development effort, partially funded by the U.S. government, the FATA Sustainable Development Project.[214] Currently, the military spearheads most development works with funding by the FATA Secretariat and the Pakistan government. The military also uses a portion of its budget for development works. There is an increasing military effort to couple development works with IO, using an incentive scheme in a particular area in return for curbing militancy. However, most economic measures still concentrate on economic "assistance," not economic "activities," thereby lagging in sustainable development. Pakistan also faces serious problems supporting economic measures due to its meager economic resources, and the limited infrastructure in FATA does not support major ventures. The FATA Sustainable

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[213] There are current plans for U.S. trainers to conduct training of the FC units. See David Montero, "U.S. Military Prepares to Train Pakistani Forces," *The Christian Science Monitor,* April 16, 2008, http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0416/p99s01-duts.html (accessed April 19, 2008).

[214] "$956 Million U.S. Funds for Infrastructure Likely," *The Dawn,* April 19, 2008, http://www.dawn.com/2008/04/19/top10.htm (accessed May 9, 2008).

Development Plan addresses some major economic and development activities in a cohesive manner but its outputs will be slow to materialize.[215]

To deny funding to militants, Pakistan relies on financial intelligence to track funds channeled to miscreants. This is a difficult task to start with, as a significant portion of Pakistani small business and local economy is undocumented. The militants do not operate through formal financial institutions but use *hawala* type networks while re-routing religious charities. The government has launched an effort to monitor the religious charities and their utilization with mixed results.

4. The Tangible Results

The Pakistani strategy to deal with the problem at hand has mixed results, described here briefly as the effects of the strategy on the Taliban and their sympathizers is discussed at length in Chapter VI.

One major tangible output of the Pakistani strategy is a considerable improvement of infrastructure in the area. Starting in 2002, the government built a network of roads along with new schools and hospitals that, though still insufficient, are a first step in an underdeveloped area. These activities allowed security forces to gain some favorable ground among the locals. However, lack of effective follow up and an inadequate IO campaign prevented them from taking full advantage of the measures. Still, according to a recent FATA survey, having witnessed an increasing level of militant violence the locals want an end to the conflict in order to acquire the benefits of political representation and development.[216] Thus, there is hope that with the renewed FATA Sustainable Development Plan and the promised U.S. $7 billion aid, development works in FATA will gain momentum.

On the military side, Pakistani forces have been in a constant battle with the militants since the start of the Operation Almizan. As noted above, Pakistan paid a huge

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[215] For details of the FATA Sustainable Development Plan, see *FATA Sustainable Development Plan (2006-2015)*.

[216] In a survey conducted in FATA by Community Appraisal and Motivation Program (CAMP), more than half of the respondents welcomed the possibility of extension of political system to FATA as a means to reduce violence and promote development. For details, see Shinwari, 73.

price for its operations in the tribal belt with 1045 soldiers killed and 2471 wounded in actions that killed around 2900 terrorists. The Pakistani forces also captured over 1100 Al Qaeda operatives, and have arrested and handed over 3800 Taliban to the Afghan government.[217]

The casualties suffered by opposing sides offer some insight on the nature of conflict. The overall balance of casualties over last five years is depicted in the graphs below. Figure 22 below shows the casualties resulting from terrorist violence between January 2003 and February 2008. There is an upward shift in the casualties throughout, with a quantum jump in mid to late 2007.
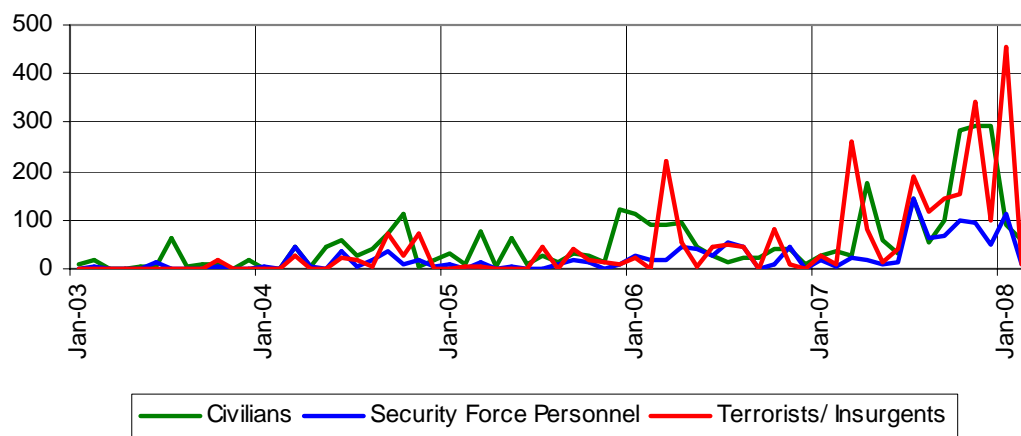
Figure 22.   Casualties of Terrorist Violence in Pakistan[218]

Figure 23 below shows the proportion of casualties among terrorists and insurgents killed as a result of security forces action, civilians, and security forces during the same period.

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[217] Information obtained from an unnamed source.

[218] Graph generated using data from "Casualties of Terrorist Violence in Pakistan," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm (accessed May 30, 2007). There are some anomalies in the data, as casualty figures for some months are inconsistent with reports from other sources.
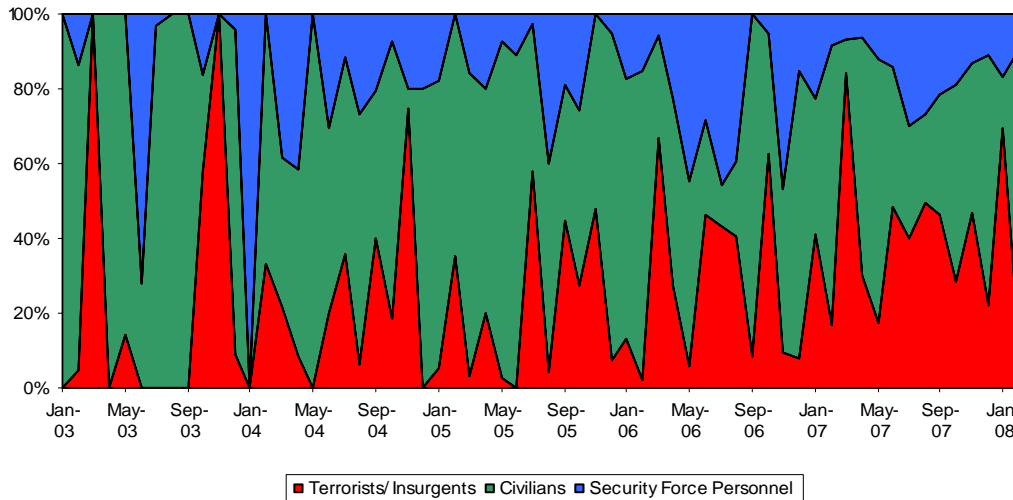
Figure 23.   Trend of Percent Share of Casualties of Terrorist Violence in Pakistan[219]

Although casualty ratios are not a sufficient measure of the success of an unconventional campaign, the ratio between militant deaths and security forces and civilian casualties is increasingly unfavorable to the miscreants, as the percentage of terrorist and insurgent casualties is slowly on the rise. This trend shows that the militants are likely to shift to their emphasis from direct attacks on security forces (e.g. ambushes and raids) to more indirect attacks in order to reduce their own casualties. This phenomenon is seen in the apparent rise of suicide attacks on security forces throughout the country. Other effects of these casualty trends on the militant organization and procedures are discussed in the next chapter.

C.   THE COALITION STRATEGY

The coalition countries are committed to varying degrees to the vision of a secure, stable, free, and prosperous Afghanistan established within the Bonn Agreement and outlined in the IROA constitution. The extent to which participating countries will act on these altruistic goals remains to be seen. The lack of unified action under a cohesive strategy leads credence to the adage that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. This section describes the efforts of the U.S., NATO, and Afghanistan governments to

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[219] Graph generated using data from "Casualties of Terrorist Violence in Pakistan."

establish strategy, focusing on the background and evolution of strategies, the application of the Elements of National Power model (Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic, DIME), and the tangible results.

1. Background of the Problem

A major goal after 9/11 included rooting out terror around the world. Terrorist safe havens, like the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, would not be permitted. On September 12, 2001, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1368 committed to taking all necessary steps to respond to 9/11. The U.S. Congress overwhelmingly authorized

> All necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons [the President of the U.S.] determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 *or harbored such organizations or persons.*[220]

Operation Enduring Freedom ensued on October 7, 2001 with astounding success. During this swift campaign, a picture perfect matching of Northern Alliance and United States Special Forces disposed of the Taliban.[221] As battles throughout Afghanistan continued, diplomats and scholars from various United Nations' member countries, Afghanistan, and its neighbors met in Bonn to put together a plan to rebuild Afghanistan.

The Bonn Agreement, signed December 5, 2001, set the stage for political transition and reconstruction of Afghanistan.[222] The milestones and goals include:

- An interim administration, with Hamid Karzai at the helm and national election milestones[223]

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[220] Katzman, italics added.

[221] The fall of the Taliban is generally dated to December 9, 2001, when Mullah Omar and the Taliban fled Kandahar.

[222] The Bonn Agreement was sanctioned by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1385 on December 6, 2001. For details see "Afghan Bonn Agreement." Afghan Government. http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm (accessed April 7, 2008).

[223] Presidential elections were held October 9, 2004. Hamid Karzai was the winner. Parliamentary and provincial council elections were held September 18, 2005 (four months behind schedule). District council elections have not taken place to date due to the security situation and difficulty determining district boundaries.

- International peacekeeping forces, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

- Formalization of emergency and constitutional *loya jirgas*.

- Outline the role United Nations including Afghan reconstruction and the humanitarian aid.

- Reorganization of Afghan military forces[224]

- Constitution of 1964 applied until permanent constitution drafted[225]

The achievements of the Bonn Agreement are lauded by politicians while critics point to instability within the country as an indicator of failure and missed opportunities.[226] Many United Nation countries signed on to implement the agreement in a massive nation building campaign. The strategy developed to implement a significant democracy building effort.

2. Transformation of Coalition Strategy

This section spotlights three components in the transformation of coalition strategy: the rebirth of U.S. COIN strategy as applied towards OEF, the growth of the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the expansion of ISAF.

a. U.S. Involvement

With the cessation of major combat operations after Operation Anaconda in March 2002,[227] the scramble to assemble a nation-building capability commenced. Combined Joint Task Force 180 (CJTF-180), formed in June 2002, took the lead. [228]

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[224] Five points abridged from Thomas H. Johnson, "Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition: The State of State-Building After War," *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 1-2 (March-June, 2006), 1-26.

[225] A permanent constitution was ratified by the 502 delegate constitutional *loya jirga* on January 4, 2004. See the full constitution at "The Constitution of Afghanistan." Afghanistan Online. http://www.afghan-web.com/politics/current_constitution.html (accessed April 7, 2008).

[226] For additional arguments for the success and failures of the Bonn Agreement, see Johnson, *Afghanistan's Post-Taliban Transition: The State of State-Building after War*.

[227] There are disagreements over the end of major combat operations in Afghanistan. Some believe that they ended in December 2001 with the fall of Kandahar. For the purpose of this thesis, the end of major combat operations is identified as the end of Operation Anaconda in March 2002.

[228] CJTF-180 consisted of a well-resourced three-star-led headquarters (XVIII Airborne Corps) with a subordinate division headquarters (TF-82). See LTG(R) David W. Barno, "Fighting 'The Other War': Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005," *Military Review*, Sep-Oct 2007.

With little counterinsurgency experience since the Vietnam War, dominance of an enemy-centric "raid mentality," a small ratio of forces to population, and the tenuous relationship between the Departments of Defense (DoD) and State (DoS), the U.S. military forces and civilian counterparts were not well postured. The introduction of ISAF to secure Kabul in 2002 allowed U.S. forces to concentrate on building ANA[229] and combat operations against remnant Taliban and Al Qaeda throughout the country. The enemy-focused strategy with limited forces increased the gap between coalition forces and the populace that should be the 'center of gravity'[230] in a counterinsurgency operation.[231]

For a short time in 2003, all of Afghanistan was the responsibility of the 10th Mountain Division. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), finding the situation both overwhelming and deteriorating, created a three-star coalition headquarters in October 2003, the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A). CFC-A introduced the first semblance of a COIN strategy[232] to the conventional minded military force in Afghanistan. It takes a significant amount of time to implement a new strategy that operatives are neither trained for nor fond of. Yet this strategy set the stage for expanded operations by U.S. and ISAF forces.

The COIN strategy espoused two overarching principles. The first identified the Afghan people, rather than the enemy, as the center of gravity. The second focused on unity of purpose between interagency departments and international partners. As seen in Figure 24 below, these principles rest upon five pillars, the tenets of the strategy: (1) defeat terrorism and deny sanctuary, (2) enable the Afghan security structure, (3) sustain area ownership, (4) enable reconstruction and good governance and

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[229] The Office of Military Cooperation - Afghanistan (OMC-A) was formed in mid-2002 to build ANA and latter the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD). NATO countries participated in training the ANA at the Kabul Military Training Center, and created the Non Commissioned Officer and Officer schools.

[230] "Center of Gravity" can be defined as "physical or moral entities that are the primary components of physical or moral strength, power and resistance." Joe Strange and Richard Iron, "Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities," 7, (Montgomery: United States Air Force Air University, 2004) http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/cog2.pdf (accessed December 7, 2007).

[231] Barno, 33.

[232] U.S. Special Forces operating in southern and eastern Afghanistan with Afghan Militia Forces and later ANA were conducting COIN operations in accordance with Special Operations Forces doctrine.

(5) engage regional states. The bottom of the Figure 24 depicts the increasing importance of information operations. This strategy provided the foundation of the strategy currently executed by U.S. and ISAF forces.
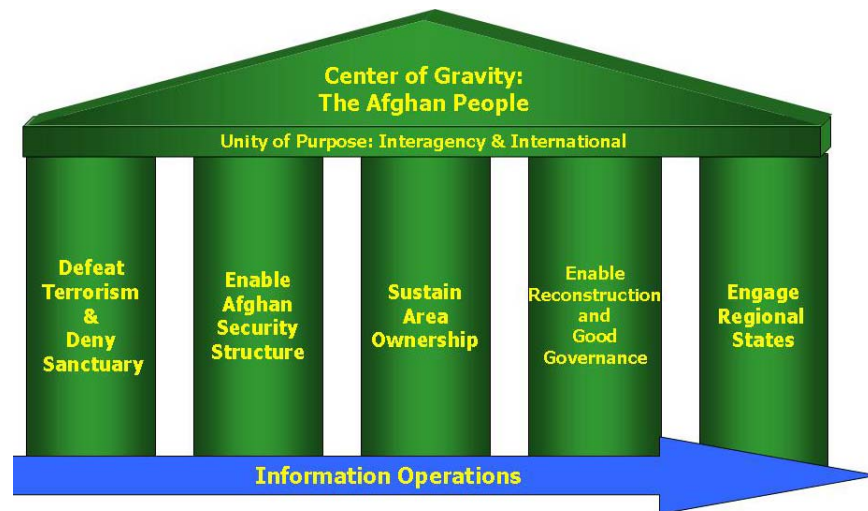
Figure 24.   CFC-A Counter-Insurgency Strategy 2003-2005[233]

With the expansion of ISAF's role throughout the country, CFC-A disbanded on November 30, 2006, and CJTF-82 now directs the U.S. forces in the ongoing OEF. The OEF commander also commands the ISAF Regional Command-East under the NATO ISAF mission. It is important to note that OEF forces do not fall under NATO ISAF command and operate with separate rules of engagement (ROE).[234]   Only 19,000 of the 28,000 U.S. forces deployed to Afghanistan fall under the ISAF command structure.[235]   A further 3,200 Marines are deploying to Afghanistan for seven months to counter the Taliban's 2008 offensive. Additionally, President Bush announced on April 4, 2008 that the U.S. would increase the number of forces in 2009 to bolster confidence among participating countries.[236]

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[233] Barno, 35.

[234] Katzman, 21.

[235] Ibid., summary.

[236] Katzman, 24; a specified number of troops was not given.

b. *ANA Development*

The creation of the Afghan National Army is an enormous undertaking and a great success story for Afghanistan. The necessity of building an ethnically diverse army capable of protecting the interests of Afghanistan became a central theme in the COIN strategy. The ANA, approximately 49,500 strong and comprised of all ethnicities, is a symbol of national unity.[237] The initial target size of 70,000 by 2009 was upgraded to 80,000 by 2010 with a new proposed target of 120,000.[238] Presently the ANA is comprised of five corps that serve as regional commands:

- 201st Corps – Kabul (Regional Command Capital)
- 203rd Corps – Gardez (Regional Command East)
- 205th Corps – Kandahar (Regional Command South)
- 207th Corps – Herat (Regional Command West)
- 209th Corps – Mazar-e-Sharif (Regional Command North)[239]

An ANA *kandak* (battalion) consists of 600 troops on paper. All ANA *Kandaks* are infantry with the exception of one mechanized and one tank battalion. Operational *Kandaks* are paired with U.S. and ISAF forces for continued training, mentoring, and tactical employment. A Special Forces unit is being trained and equipped by U.S. and French Special Operations Forces, with plans to produce a total of six commando *Kandaks* modeled after U.S. Rangers.[240] With time, ANA has become increasingly professional and disciplined, conducting independent operations with only

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[237] Unfortunately, the ANA has been plagued with a high AWOL rate and large proportions of the Army on leave to return to their home villages to deliver money to their families because there is no local banking system to transmit funds. The AWOL rate dropped from 33 percent in 2006 to its current rate of 8 percent. These facts are the experiences of the author and Antonial Gioustozzi, "Afghanistan's National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor: In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror,* Vol VI, Issue 9, May 1, 2008 in http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374139 (accessed May 12, 2008).

[238] Katzman, 32. The authors of this thesis believe that the 120,000 target cannot be met unless the Afghan government's legitimacy grows substantially. Strategies are recommended in Chapter VII to gain the requisite legitimacy and authority.

[239] "History," The Official Website of the Afghan National Army. http://www.mod.gov.af/#History (accessed April 22, 2008).

[240] History," The Official Website of the Afghan National Army. http://www.mod.gov.af/#History (accessed April 22, 2008).

the assistance of U.S. and ISAF trainers. U.S. Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) and ISAF Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) instill confidence in ANA *Kandaks* with logistical assistance and a communication channel for air support and medical evacuation for wounded soldiers.[241]

c.   ISAF Expansion

Originally, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created to provide a secure environment in Kabul and support reconstruction. This modest role eventually developed into five regional commands covering the entire country.   The transition commenced with NATO assuming command of ISAF on August 11, 2003. This assuaged the difficulties of changing lead nations and setting up new headquarters every six months, and allowed for a semi-unified command of forces under an established organization.[242]   The ISAF initially took on the relatively peaceful north and west. As their force package and capabilities grew, they started operating in the south, assuming command of the east on October 5, 2006.[243]   NATO's Allied Command Operations (ACO) has overall responsibility for operations in Afghanistan.   The subordinate headquarters, the Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Headquarters Brunssum, provides operational control, planning, and logistics. The five regional commands under ISAF Headquarters, depicted in Figure 25, complement and support the ANA corps deployment as follows.

- Regional Command Capital – Kabul, lead nation Italy
- Regional Command East – Bagram, lead nation U.S.
- Regional Command South – Kandahar, lead nation UK
- Regional Command West – Heart, lead nation Italy
- Regional Command North – Mazar-e-Sharif, lead nation Germany[244]

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[241] Katzman, 32-33.

[242] "ISAF Command Structure," International Security Assistance Forces. http://www.nato.int/isaf/structure/comstruc/index.html (accessed April 29, 2008).

[243] "Helping to bring security, stability and foster development in Afghanistan," International Security Assistance Force, March 31, 2008. http://www.nato.int/issues/isaf/index.html (accessed April 22, 2008).

[244] "ISAF Regional Command Structure," International Security Assistance Force, April 28, 2008. http://www.nato.int/isaf/structure/regional_command/index.html (accessed April 29, 2008).

Aside from military operations, the ISAF efforts are manifested in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). A PRT includes civilian and military personnel and is a key to success for the three-part strategy of security, governance, and development. There are currently 26 PRTs assisting local authorities with security and reconstruction efforts. This is the best effort to reach the grassroots level and affect the Afghan populace.[245]
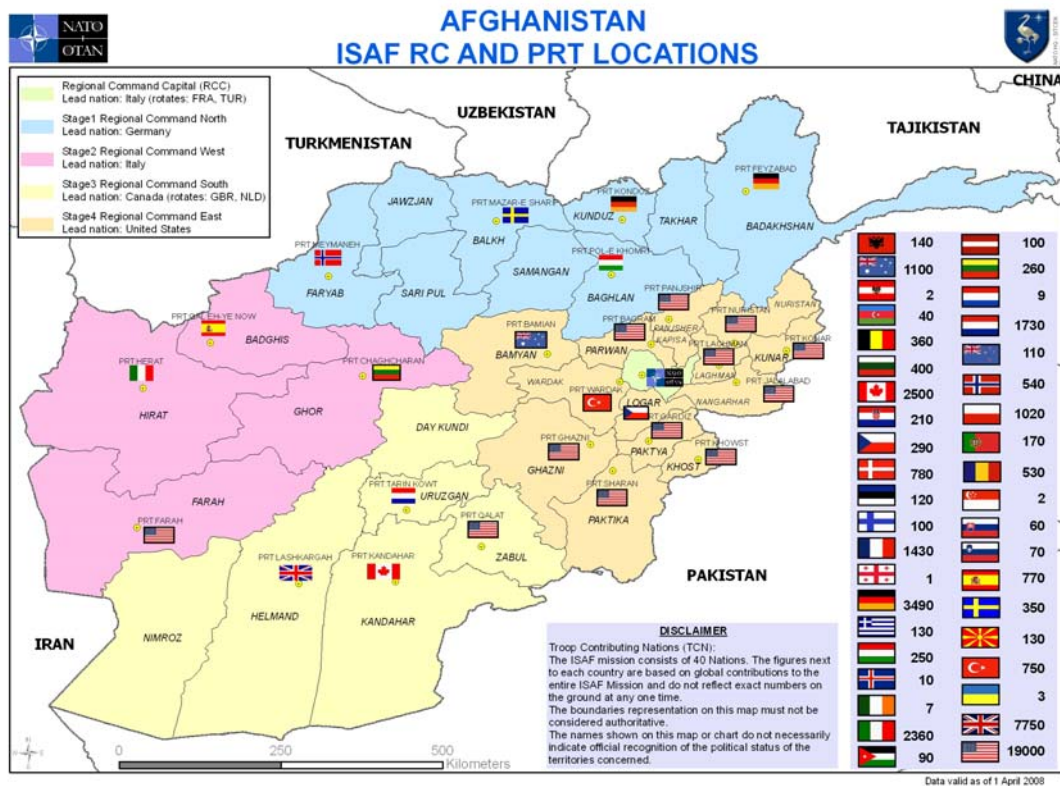
Figure 25.   ISAF Regional Commands and PRTs[246]

3.   The Current Coalition Strategy

The strategic and operational situations are messy. Afghanistan is a conglomeration of three separate command structures split among the Afghan Ministry of Defense, U.S. led Operation Enduring Freedom, and NATO led ISAF.   Thirty-nine

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245 "Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)," International Security Assistance Force, May 5, 2008. http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/recon_dev/prts.html (accessed May 8, 2008).

246 "Afghanistan ISAF RC and PRT Locations," International Security Assistance Force. http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/maps/graphics/afghanistan_prt3.jpg (accessed April 22, 2008).

countries make up the ISAF while 60 countries and institutions provide continued assistance in the rebuilding effort. Three special civilian representatives, including the UN, EU, and NATO, conduct bilateral and multilateral coordination for military and civilian security and reconstruction efforts.[247] The common theme among those interviewed for this thesis is that NATO and ISAF do not have a coherent unified strategy in Afghanistan. Former ISAF commander, General David Richards, says, "the current lack of unity and coordination between the numerous different organizations and agencies often manifests itself in a situation close to anarchy, both military and civil."[248] This is not surprising given the players involved. The *Afghanistan Study Group Report: Revitalizing Our Efforts, Rethinking Our Strategies*, released January 30, 2008, describes many of these shortcomings. In an effort to tackle the seemingly insurmountable coordination effort and lack of a coherent strategy, the NATO summit in early April 2008 released the ISAF Strategic Vision. This vision will take time to trickle down to the NATO units on the ground, just as the COIN strategy introduced by CFC-A in 2003 took time.

With the ISAF Strategic Vision fresh off the press, this thesis focuses its analysis on the U.S. strategic approach. The ISAF Strategic Vision parallels the U.S. approach with few variations. The most important departure is a massive effort to synchronize military and civilian operations among the plethora of organizations. The diplomatic, information, military and economic elements of national power are utilized to describe the strategy employed thus far. Explained in ends, ways and means,[249] the strategy seeks to provide for a safe, secure, prosperous, and democratic Afghanistan.

a.   *Diplomatic and Political*

The diplomatic ways in which the U.S. plans to achieve its strategy in Afghanistan are identified as strengthening the central government and implementing rule

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[247] "Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve," International Crisis Group, February 6, 2008. http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5285 (accessed April 22, 2008).

[248] Ibid.,12.

[249] *Ends* – something toward which one strives, a goal; *Ways* – a method, plan, or means of attaining a goal; *Means* – an agency, instrument, or method used to attain an end (available resources).

of law, with emphasis on the national judiciary and the urban centers first, and promoting regional cooperation second. The means in which these ways are pursued include the creation of judicial and police training centers, provision of military aid to Pakistan, and a string of high level U.S. visits to Afghanistan. The intended benefits of these actions are irrefutable. Creating a quality legal and police system in a nation where none existed aside from local level councils of elders applying the Islamic *sharia* law[250] is a huge step in the right direction to bring crime and corruption under control. Providing military aid packaged to Pakistan to make it a more capable ally in the war on terror and gain greater control over its territory is imperative to the security of both nations. High level visits from U.S. government officials show a continuing high level of commitment to the Afghan government and bolsters its credibility within national and international circles.

b. *Information and Intelligence*

The information campaign in which the U.S. plans to achieve its strategy in Afghanistan is not addressed in the U.S. strategy outlined in the Report for Congress. It is assumed that the standard ways employed by individual agencies in Afghanistan are applied through their individual means. The DoS relies on standard press releases, the Voice of America broadcast network and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which provides many small radio broadcast stations to local Afghan communities. Department of Defense assets include its Public Affairs branch, which issues press releases like DoS and coordinates the embedding of press correspondents with deployed DoD units. The Psychological Operations branch uses strategic influence capabilities and tactical level means of communicating with target audiences, e.g. loudspeakers, print, and radio broadcasts. While each agency has the means to conduct information and influence operations, there is a lack of specified information goals and strategy for reaching out to Afghan and international audiences to improve understanding of the Afghan and U.S. efforts and successes and to counter Taliban information operations.

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[250] Ali Wardak and Davis Spivak, "Afghanistan's Domestic Legal Framework," *The Senlis Council*, http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/008_publication/domestic_law_exec_summ.

c.   *Military*

The military ways in which the U.S. plans to achieve its strategy in Afghanistan are identified as improving security and curbing the power of regional warlords, with an implied task being counter terrorism and Taliban. The means employed to improve security include the continuing effort to train and professionalize the ANA and the continued security presence of the NATO led ISAF. As of the end of 2007, approximately half of the projected 80,000 ANA troops had completed training; however, logistical problems plague the fielding of weapons and equipment.[251] The overall military strategy rests on the ISAF and U.S. OEF operations from firebases and large scale troop movements to capture or kill insurgents. These heavy-handed methods concern President Karzai[252] and alienate the populace. Compounding this are the warlords who President Karzai co-opted, some of whom are accused of being abusive in controlling their regions.[253] The appointment of more moderate technocrats continues at a slow pace as ISAF and the ANA work their way to the provinces.

d.   *Economic*

The economic ways in which the U.S. plans to achieve its strategy in Afghanistan are identified as combating narcotics trafficking, rebuilding infrastructure, and improving the economy. Many means are identified for this task, including encouraging alternative crops to replace opium production, using PRTs to coordinate infrastructure reconstruction, and macroeconomic investment from foreign companies. Poppy eradication is extremely complicated. The sudden loss of opium from the economy will have drastic effects, as the estimated $3 billion in narcotics trade accounts for nearly half of the Afghan economy.[254] The expanded use of PRTs is a good move for the reconstruction. Their deployment to firebases to provide security is a safe method of deployment, but fails to integrate the teams with the population and isolates them. In

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[251] Katzman.

[252] Barnett R. Rubin, "Afghanistan: A U.S. Perspective*," Crescent of Crisis: U.S. – European Strategy for the Greater Middle East*, (Harrisonburg: Brookings Institute Press, 2006), 150.

[253] Rubin, 154.

[254] Ibid., 155.

addition, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have created their own internal systems instead of utilizing Afghan resources, which engenders resentment against their efforts and fuels Taliban propaganda.[255] The same propaganda deters foreign business due to concerns over the security of investments.

4. The Tangible Results

A nation, according to Adam Smith, must be able to fulfill certain duties to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the populace. Those perceived duties include protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies, protecting every member of society from the injustice or oppression of every other member and establishing an exact administration of justice, and erecting and maintaining certain public works and public institutions.[256] The Overseas Development Institute identified ten attributes that a sovereign government must strive for, reflecting core functions of a legitimate state:

- legitimate monopoly on the means of violence
- administrative control
- management of public finances
- investment in human capital
- delineation of citizenship rights and duties
- provision of infrastructure services
- formation of the market
- management of the state's assets
- international relations
- rule of law[257]

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[255] Karzai, 74.

[256] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* ed. Edwin Cannan (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd, 1904), 221.

[257] Ghani, et al., "Closing the Sovereignty Gap: An Approach to State Building," (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2005) 6, www.odi.org.uk/Publications/working_papers/wp253.pdf, (accessed April 5, 2008).

The IROA has been unable to achieve the Overseas Development Institute's recommended levels, thus preventing complete legitimacy in the eyes of Afghans. The Taliban efforts plague the reconstruction, stability, and nation building activities of the coalition and NGOs. This section describes some tangible results of the coalition's strategy, a strategy that aims to help develop a trustworthy government.

The NATO ISAF and U.S. governments continually seek metrics to evaluate overall counterinsurgency operations. A single solution cannot be developed, as every insurgency has its own features. But leaders from the nations contributing to rebuild Afghanistan demand evidence of progress to present to their constituents. Evidence includes comparisons over time, like improvements reported on the NATO website:

- In 2001, 8 percent of Afghans had access to basic healthcare. In early 2007, the figure is up to 83 percent.

- In 2001, 1.2 million children attended school daily; today, 7 million do, including 2 million girls. Between 43,000 and 45,000 teachers were trained in 2006.

- To date, there have been 88,136 anti-personnel mines destroyed, as well as 11,524 anti-tank mines.[258]

Another statistic on the minds of politicians is that of service members' flag draped coffins returning home. This does not measure success or failure, but it is an indicator of the increasing lethality of operations in Afghanistan. With the exception of 2003, the number of deaths of coalition forces increased every year (see Figure 26 below). This is probably a product of two variables: increased numbers of coalition forces outside the wire, and the Taliban's adaptive tactics, techniques and procedures, discussed in Chapter VI.

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[258] Information from http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/recon_dev/index.html (accessed April 22, 2008). Many of these statistics are contested by other sources but serve as a positive outlook for progress in light of diminishing successes in reconstruction and development efforts.

Coalition Deaths by Year 2003-07
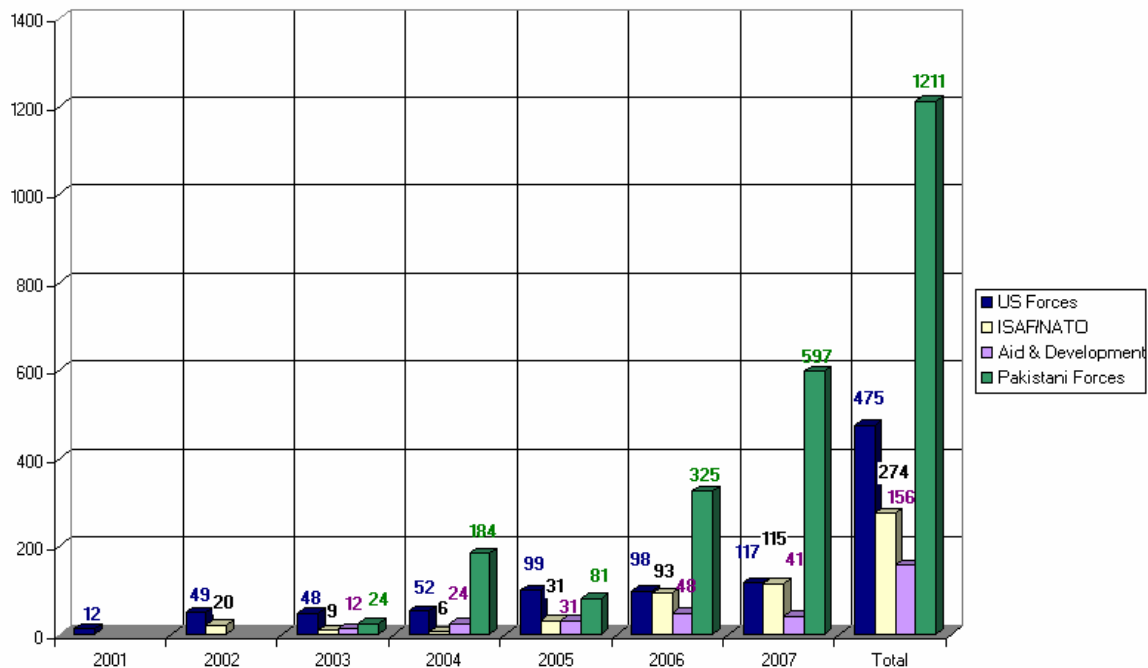
Figure 26.   Coalition Deaths by Year[259]

Public opinion is paramount to the success of this strategy. Thus, it is important to begin with the Afghan population's perception of government and security. The Asia Foundation conducted surveys in Afghanistan over the last three years on various issues facing the country.[260] Concerning the government, the people of Afghanistan feel distant from their representative body, with 79 percent feeling that the government does not care about their constituents. Although this seems bleak, there is a positive side, as the majority's views on democracy are optimistic.

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[259] Data about U.S. and ISAF NATO casualties obtained from "Operation Enduring Freedom." *iCasualties.Org*, 21 January 2008, http://icasualties.org/oef/ (accessed 21 January 2008) while data about Aid and Development casualties is taken from Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report* (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), http://www.csis.org/burke (accessed April 22, 2008). Data about casualties of Pakistani forces comes from "Casualties of Terrorist Violence in Pakistan," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm.

[260] The target demographics for the Afghan in 2007 Survey included a population of 6,263. The demographic breakdown of those interviewed is congruent with the Afghan population overall, including rural and urban centers. The survey demographics include Central/Kabul – 18.7%; Eastern – 9.7%; South Central – 14.5%; South Western – 9.2%; Western – 11.5%; and Northern – 28.9%. Participants were split evenly between males and females. For details, see Afghanistan in 2007 Survey, 111.

| It is generally not acceptable to talk negatively about the government in public. | 30 | 39 | 22 | 7 |
| I don't think that the government cares much about what people like me think. | 32 | 47 | 15 | 3 |

Strongly Agree % ■ Somewhat Agree %
□ Somewhat Disagree% □ Strongly Disagree %
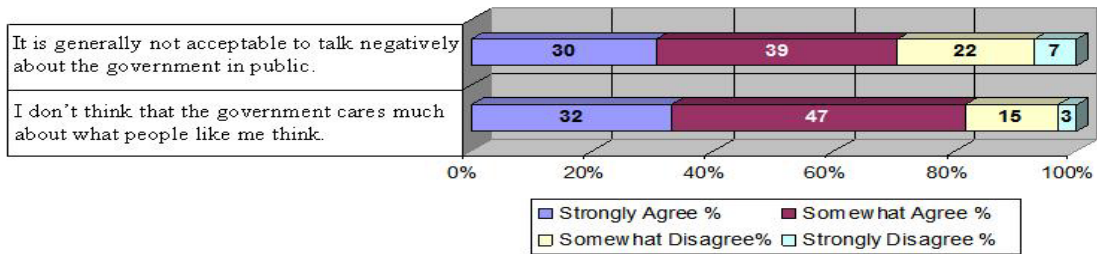
Figure 27.   Perceptions towards the Government[261]

With wars spanning three decades, security weighs heavy on the minds of most Afghans. The vast majority, 66 percent, rate security in their area as either very good or quite good, while 33 percent describe the situation as either quite bad or very bad. The areas reporting a negative security situation are predominately south and east, the traditional homeland of the Taliban. According to the UN Secretary General Report of March 6, 2008, the "conflict has been concentrated in a fairly small area: 70 percent of the security incidents occurred in 10 percent (40) of Afghanistan's districts, home to 6 percent of the country's population."[262]
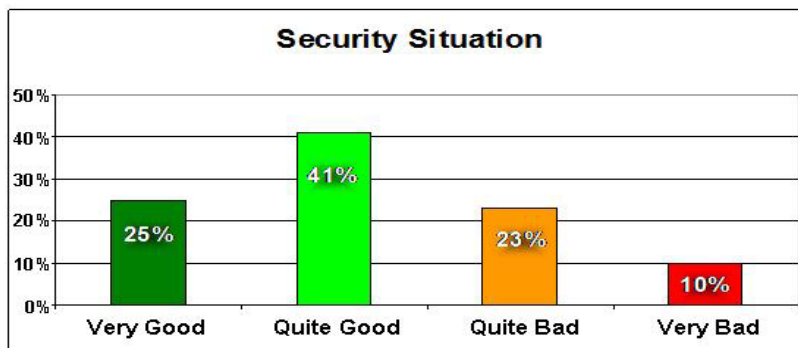
Figure 28.   Security Situation in Afghanistan[263]

One third of the country reporting unfavorable security conditions contributes to the increasing number of security incidents. The number of skirmishes since 2003 has

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261 Data obtained from *Afghanistan in 2007 Survey*, 24. The Afghan population often give the answer that they believe people of authority are looking for; thus these survey results should be considered slanted considerably in the government's favor.

262 UN Secretary General Report, *The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security*, March 6, 2008, http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/973861.8.html (accessed April 23, 2008).

263 *Afghanistan in 2007 Survey*, 27.

intensified, as shown in Figure 29 below. The Taliban have flourished over the past five years, expanding their sphere of influence towards the west, with some limited confrontations in the north.
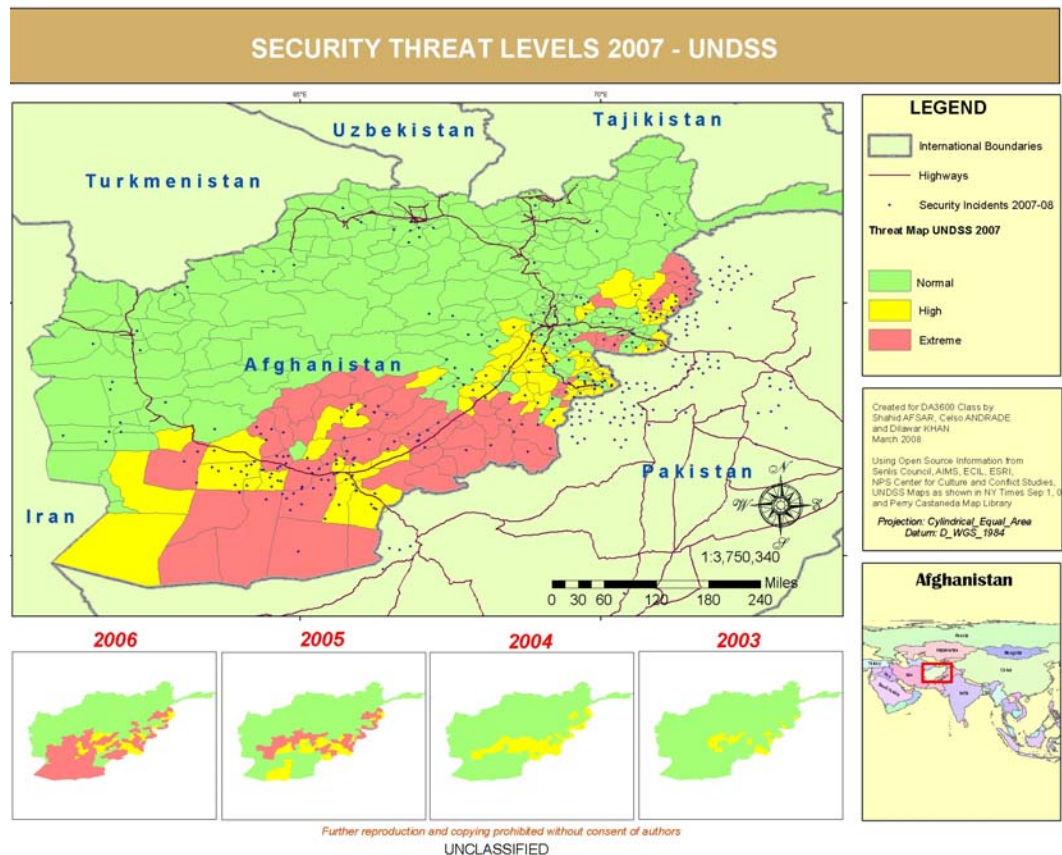
Figure 29.   Security Threat Level[264]

The ANSF, consisting mostly of the ANA and ANP, are charged with providing security in the COIN fight. The results of the survey in this regard are upbeat, with the majority of people trusting both the ANA and ANP.[265] Afghans agree that the ANA and ANP need additional training and assistance from foreign troops before they can be self-

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[264] Developed using ArcGIS 9.2 with source data derived from United Nations Department of Safety and Security Maps as published in "Dangerous Areas Expanding across Southern Afghanistan," New York Times; September 1, 2007; http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2007/09/01/world/middleeast/20070901_AFGHAN_GRAPHIC.html# (accessed March 1, 2008).

[265] The interviews and experience of the authors support the ANA findings, but do not agree with the ANP results. The ANP, generally, are untrained, corrupt, and not trusted by the population throughout southern Afghanistan.

sufficient in fighting against insurgent and criminal elements. Figure 30 below presents a complete breakdown of Afghan perceptions.
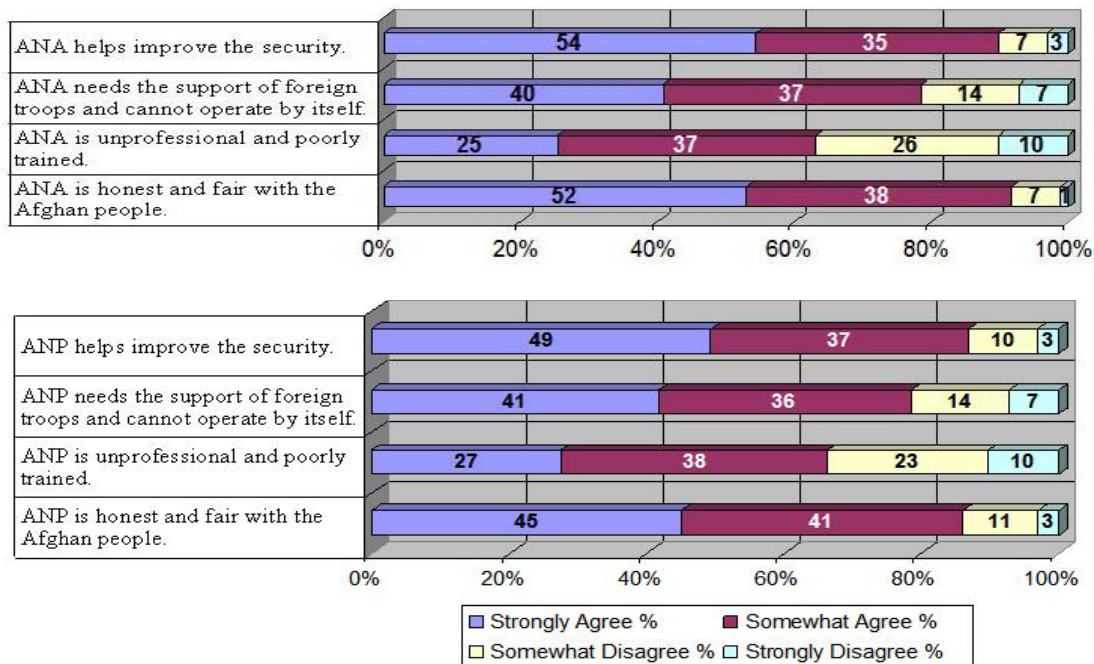
Figure 30.   Perceptions about the ANA and ANP[266]

According to the authors' survey, most U.S. and NATO field operators who have worked in Afghanistan believe that they were successful in battling the Taliban. The survey aimed at gauging the perceptions of Coalition Forces. Answers demonstrate optimism, as 79.6 percent ranked the Coalition as moderately or very successful in its military operations, while around 20 percent see it as in stalemate or failure. One might infer that those with a favorable outlook see things from a tactical viewpoint, and the Coalition Forces have not been defeated in a direct battle. On the other hand, those with an unfavorable position probably see the strategic picture through an unconventional paradigm, taking into consideration the Taliban's growth and knowing that in an insurgency, you can win every battle but lose the war.

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[266] Afghanistan in 2007 Survey, 31-32.
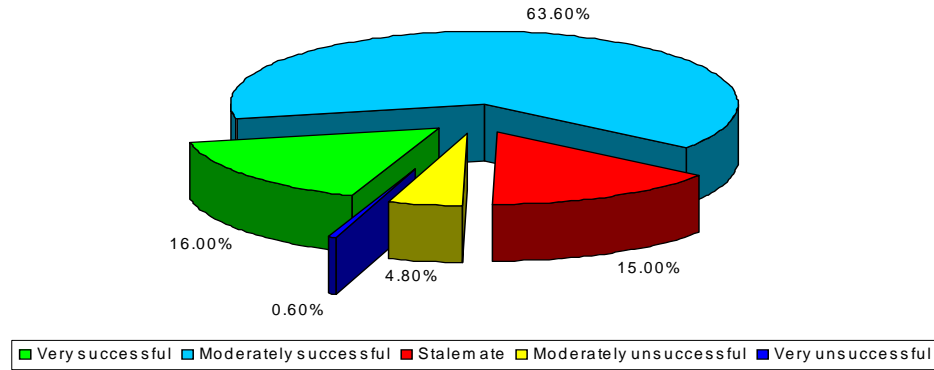
Figure 31.   Perceptions of Success or Failure in Afghanistan[267]

D.   CONCLUSION

A coherent, unified strategy underpins any successful military campaign. This chapter provides an overview of the background and transformation of Coalition COIN strategies and a snapshot of current policies. These strategies have undergone major transformation since commencement of OEF and Operation Almizan. While policy makers and field operatives undoubtedly do their best to win the struggle and restore peace and harmony, the results have been far from satisfactory for many reasons. Chapter VI explores some of those reasons, along with the effects of the Coalition's strategies on the Taliban's efforts. The next chapter also evaluates Taliban strengths, weaknesses and adaptation trends.

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[267] Shahid Afsar and Chris Samples, "Taliban Survey" (Opinion Survey, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

VI. EFFECTS, ADAPTATION, AND FUTURE OPTIONS FOR THE TALIBAN

> The Afghan resistance is, in my opinion, growing. Such behavior...is conditioned by centuries of tradition, geography, climate and religion…. Evidently, the [U.S.-led] Coalition forces are also being seen as a threat to the nation. — Boris Gromov[268]

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter illustrates the tangible operational results (outputs) of the current Taliban strategy and their effects on the insurgency system model. The chapter includes a brief depiction of the Coalition counterinsurgency strategies that appear to indirectly enable the Taliban. The chapter also identifies adaptation trends within the Taliban, along with the Taliban strengths and weaknesses, and lays out likely options for the Taliban. The analysis in this chapter serves as the basis for recommendations to configure an effective COIN strategy in Chapter VII.

B. RESULTS OF THE CURRENT TALIBAN STRATEGY AND ITS EFFECTS

The current Taliban strategy, as described in Chapter III, is to patiently conduct a defensive insurgency, a "war of the flea." The effects of this strategy demonstrate how the Taliban influence the environment in order to perpetuate their growth. This process forms part of the last feedback loop and growth mechanism of the insurgency system model described in Chapter II (reproduced here as Figure 32 below). The influences, operational results or outputs of the organization fall into two main categories: physical outputs, and perceptual or psychological outputs.

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[268] Boris Gromov, the general who supervised the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989, as quoted in M. K. Bhadrakumar, "Afghanistan: Why NATO Cannot Win," *Asia Times* (September 30, 2006), http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HI30Df01.html (accessed March 11, 2008).
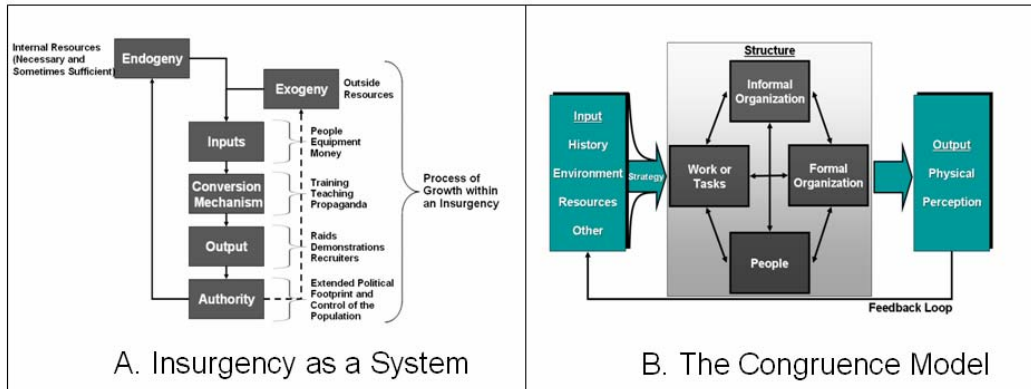
Figure 32.   The Conceptual Models for Analysis of the Taliban Insurgency

1.   Physical Outputs

A major output of the Taliban and their associates in their struggle against Coalition Forces has been their physical effect. With the population as the main center of gravity of an insurgency, the physical output of the Taliban campaign can be measured in terms of the areas or population centers where the Taliban operate freely and exert some form of control over the population through their physical presence. This output also manifests itself through physical attacks against Coalition Forces and government infrastructure. These attacks serve four major purposes: 1) they demonstrate to the local populace that the Taliban are still holding out against their enemies, thereby dissuading the public from siding with the government, 2) they incite a heavy-handed reaction by the Coalition Forces that provides a better recruiting environment for the Taliban 3) they attrite the security forces in terms of personnel and resources, thereby imposing caution while taking away their freedom of action and 4) they indirectly affect the domestic populations of the troop contributing nations. The casualties suffered by the Coalition Forces from physical attacks by the Taliban (described in Chapter 5 Figure 26) clearly illustrate an increasing level of violence with an obvious payoff. Because of these attacks and their effects, the Taliban have enhanced their control across the Pashtun belt and are threatening to extend further. According to a recent, and somewhat controversial, report by Senlis Council,

[Fifty-four] percent of Afghanistan's landmass hosts a permanent Taliban presence….The Taliban are the de facto governing authority in significant portions of territory in the south and east, and are starting to control parts of the local economy and key infrastructure such as roads and energy supply.[269]

This phenomenon (Figure 33 below) clearly shows that the physical outputs of the Taliban insurgency increasingly affect the environment to the Taliban advantage.
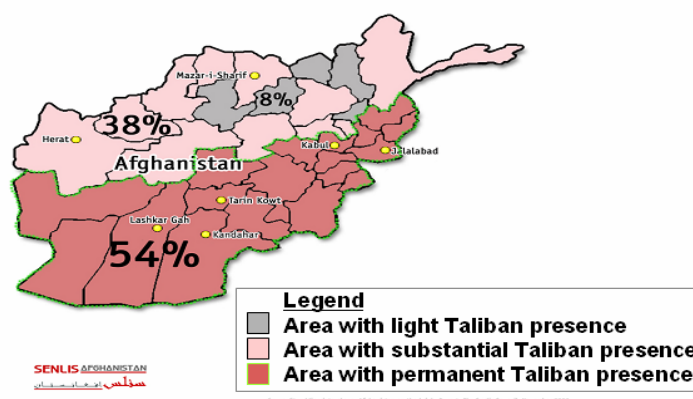
Figure 33.   Perceived Taliban Control in Afghanistan According to Senlis Report[270]

2.   Perceptual (Psychological) Outputs

The second major product of the Taliban strategy is their ability to influence perceptions of the local population and other actors. The perceptual or psychological results of the Taliban strategy over time can be measured by opinion polls conducted among the local populace. The Taliban have significant success in this regard, as their influence on the population has steadily increased. As highlighted in a recent ABC News, BBC, ARD Poll (Figure 34 below), the positive rating of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan has been on a steady decline, from 68 percent in 2005 to 42 percent in 2007. A significant portion of the Afghan population perceives the Taliban as getting stronger over time, an impression that certainly influences the decision whether to support the government or

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269 *Stumbling into Chaos: Afghanistan on the Brink* (London, UK: The Senlis Council, 2007) (accessed January 10, 2008).

270 Ibid.

the Taliban. Therefore, local perceptions generated by the insurgency are enabling the Taliban to garner more willing and unwilling support for their cause, thus delegitimizing Coalition efforts.
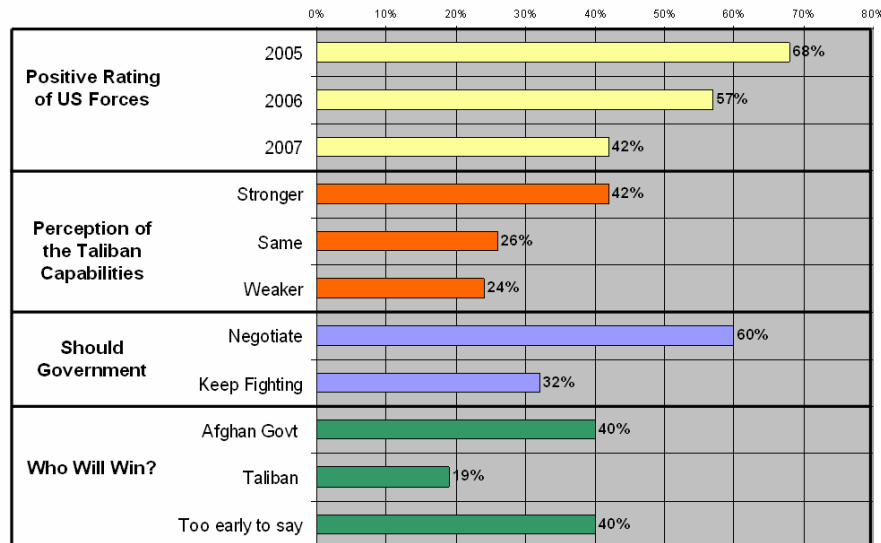
Figure 34.   Afghan Perceptions of the Insurgency[271]

3.   Effect of the Outputs and Feedback Loop on the Insurgency System

As described in Figure 32, the outputs of the insurgency system model affect the endogenous and exogenous resources and the environment of the insurgency through the feedback and growth loop. The physical and perceptual outputs generated by the Taliban allow them to extend their footprint among the population. This puts them in a better position to control people's behavior, in contrast to the government forces' intermittent presence. Popular impressions of Taliban strength and capabilities thus influence expectations about the eventual outcome of the struggle. Figure 34 above shows that only 40 percent of the people are hopeful about the success of the government, while a significant 40 percent are undecided and thus vulnerable targets for future Taliban information operations. These perceptions also affect Taliban fighters' self-image and increase their confidence in their ability to regain rule, suggests Graeme Smith in his

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[271] Developed from Gary Langer, "Afghanistan: Where Things Stand - ABC News, BBC, ARD Poll," ABC News, http://abcnews.go.com/PollingUnit/story?id=3931809 and Cordesman.

recent survey of Taliban operatives.[272] The ground situation thus turns into a battle for control of the population between the central government and the Taliban, as depicted in Figure 35 below. According to some current estimates, around half of the population is under local control and more favorable to Taliban messages because of the Taliban make better use of the Pashtun culture to further their goals.[273] The control of the population is a zero-sum game and any progress by the Taliban means a reduction in the legitimacy of the government.
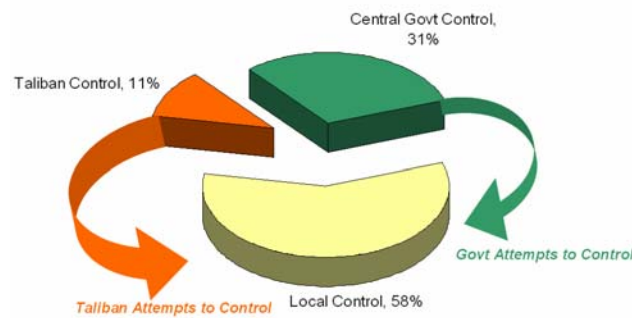
Figure 35.   The Battle for Control of Population in Afghanistan[274]

Another apparent effect of the Taliban outputs is the insurgency's ability to grow internally. With the increasing demonstration of its effectiveness, the insurgency takes on a life of its own and, like a successful business, attracts more resources, recruits, funding, intelligence and cooperation from locals. A growing Taliban presence in areas with higher ratio of security incidents demonstrates this effect. It also causes the organization to adapt effectively to countermeasures by modifying its structure, mechanisms and TTPs. As suggested by the insurgency system model (Figure 32 above), the new resources go back into the insurgency system and produce more sizable outputs, thereby creating a snowball effect.

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[272] Graeme Smith, *Talking to the Taliban.*

[273] Ibid.

[274] Derived from Director of National Intelligence's testimony before Senate Committee on Armed Services as quoted in Ibid.

C. PROBLEM AREAS IN THE COALITION COIN STRATEGIES

As highlighted in Chapter V, Coalition COIN strategies have changed, yet are not able to solve the problem at hand. The authors acknowledge that policymakers face immensely complex problems with no "magic bullet" solutions; this study does not involve an exhaustive critique of the policy. Nonetheless, there are some common themes in Coalition strategies, which do not contribute to success or cause problems on their own. This section describes these problem areas in light of Sepp's "Best Practices for Counterinsurgency"[275] shown in Figure 36 below.

Kalev Sepp's Summary of Successful and Unsuccessful COIN Practices	
Successful	**Unsuccessful**
• Emphasis on intelligence.	• Primacy of military direction of counterinsurgency.
• Focus on population, their needs, and security.	• Priority to "kill-capture" enemy, not on engaging population.
• Secure areas established, expanded.	• Battalion-size operations as the norm.
• Insurgents isolated from population (population control).	• Military units concentrated on large bases for protection.
• Single authority (charismatic/dynamic leader).	• Special Forces focused on raiding.
• Effective, pervasive psychological operations (PSYOP) campaigns.	• Adviser effort a low priority in personnel assignment.
• Amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents.	• Building, training indigenous army in image of U.S. Army.
• Police in lead; military supporting.	• Peacetime government processes.
• Police force expanded, diversified.	• Open borders, airspace, coastlines.
• Conventional military forces reoriented for counterinsurgency.	
• Special Forces, advisers embedded with indigenous forces.	
• Insurgent sanctuaries denied.	

Figure 36.   Sepp's Summary of Successful and Unsuccessful COIN Practices

1. Direction and Control of COIN Effort

In order for a COIN campaign to succeed, the COIN effort needs a unified objective and direction. Unfortunately, this is apparently missing in the COIN effort against the Taliban. There is a clear lack of consensus among the Coalition partners about how the problem of instability should be tackled and the end state to be achieved. This

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[275] Sepp analyzes various historical case studies of counterinsurgencies to identify the practices, which best provided suitable dividends while highlighting those methods which led to failure. For details see Kalev I. Sepp, ""Best Practices" in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May 2005), http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MayJun05/indexmayjun05.asp (accessed November 21, 2007).

results in diverse, uncoordinated and sometimes conflicting objectives pursued by the partners in their respective areas of responsibility. For example, there is a clear difference in the strategies implemented by the U.S., British, and the Pakistani governments. This inconsistency allows the Taliban to conserve forces in one area while increasing their activities in others.

In current COIN strategies, overemphasis on a military solution poses a considerable problem.[276] If the ultimate aim is peace and stability, the military confrontation approach does not fit well with the Pashtun culture, as local deaths call for revenge and thereby initiate a vicious circle of violence. With the current Coalition strategy of using various degrees of military might, and the Taliban defensive strategy, the conflict will wear on for a long time, with each passing day increasing the probability of Taliban success. Hence, there is a need to evolve a new strategy that shifts the emphasis to non-military means.

Another problem with the current COIN effort is its top down approach, where the government aims to control the top layer of the social fabric without any real control at the grassroots level. Most government efforts concentrate on retaining control of provincial and district centers, leaving the countryside wide open for the Taliban. Figure 37 below depicts how the government presence is manifested mainly at the provincial level or higher. As a result, the Taliban have more success, growing from grassroots upwards, while the government cannot push down its control to the local level. Thus, there should be a major shift in the overall direction of the COIN effort at all political tiers to reach out to the lowest level.

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[276]Sepp analyzes various historical case studies of counterinsurgencies to identify the practices, which best provided suitable dividends while highlighting those methods which led to failure. For details see Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices" in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May 2005), http://usacac.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MayJun05/indexmayjun05.asp (accessed November 21, 2007), 10.
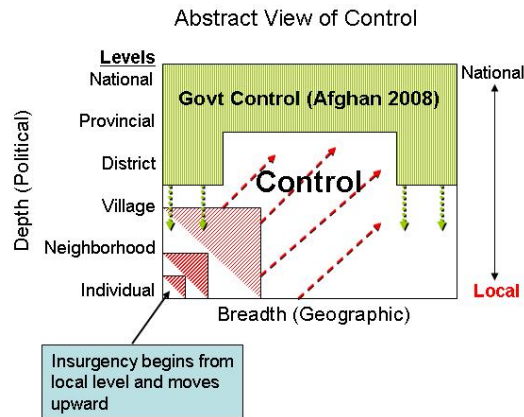
Figure 37.　Effects of Top Down Approach of COIN[277]

2.　Information and Perception Management

The information and perception management pillars of the COIN strategy could be improved. There is no overarching or unified information strategy to serve as a common frame of reference for the different agencies operating in the region. The inadequate information operations by the Coalition do not employ a deep cultural or religious understanding. This deficiency makes the Coalition IO campaign reactive and slow, allowing the Taliban to use their excellent information machinery with ease.

Intelligence gathering is mainly restricted technical intelligence means, with insufficient human intelligence (HUMINT) outreach in most parts of the affected area. This is in part because it is extremely difficult for outsiders to operate in a tightly integrated tribal structure. The absence of security forces and their limited interaction with the population at the grassroots level may also be a major cause of the problem.

3.　Military Strategy and Practices

The military portion of the strategy disproportionately stresses the political, informational, and the economic tiers of the strategy, which in itself is a problem.[278] Over reliance on a military approach ends up winning tactical engagements at the cost of the

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[277] Adapted from Gordon H. McCormick's "Depth of Population Control" paradigm. (Gordon McCormick, Defense Analysis Department, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.)

[278] Sepp.

strategic game. A major area of concern is the overemphasis on kill-capture missions using large-scale, semi-conventional sweep operation rather than intelligence driven operations and engagement of the population.[279] This approach causes civilian collateral damage, which in the tribal Pashtun society invokes the *badal* (revenge) tenet of Pashtunwali, allowing relatively easy and voluntary recruitment for the Taliban.[280] In a recent survey conducted by the *Globe and Mail,* a significant number of Taliban foot soldiers reported that they joined the movement for revenge after someone from their family had been killed by Coalition air strikes.[281] The Taliban are thus

> becoming synonymous with Afghan resistance. The mindless violations of the Afghan code of honor by the Coalition forces during their search-and-destroy missions and the excessive use of force during military operations leading to loss of innocent lives have provoked widespread revulsion among Afghan people.[282]

Interestingly, the same opinion is shared by most Coalition field operatives as evident in response to the authors' survey (Figure 38 below). Most respondents consider lack of intelligence driving operations as the major cause of failure, followed by inappropriate non-kinetic and kinetic strategies.

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[279] Sepp defines primacy of kill-capture missions as another problem area.

[280] Johnson, *On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan,* 93.

[281] Graeme Smith, *Talking to the Taliban.*

[282] Bhadrakumar.

Likely Causes of Failure
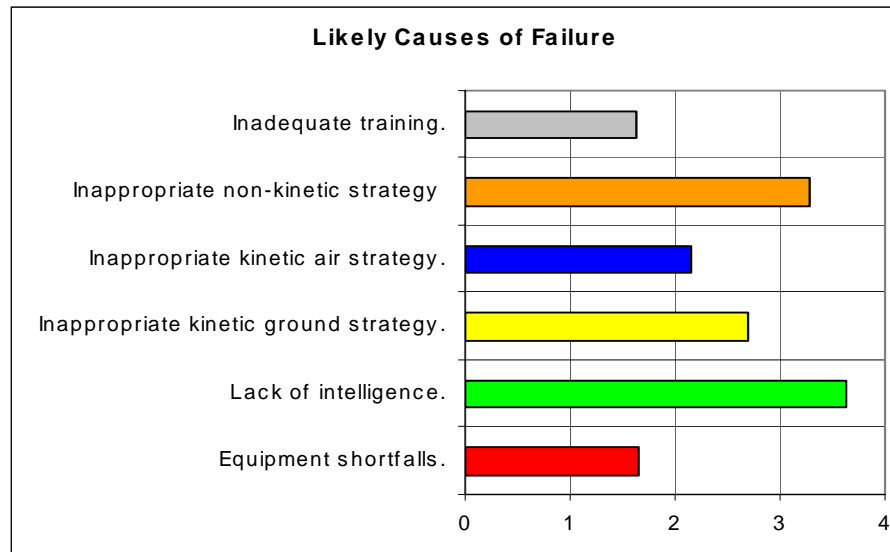
Figure 38.   Likely Causes of Failure of Coalition Strategy in Pashtun Belt[283]

The security forces generally remain concentrated at isolated company and larger sized forward operating bases for protection[284] rather than maintaining a round the clock presence in the villages and interacting with the population to gain intelligence and win support. This enables the Taliban to intimidate the villages and countryside and thereby gain credibility with their threats and promises. Instead of being utilized in an unconventional and indirect role, the Special Forces are mainly used for raiding[285] or as a "super infantry," which totally offsets their primary capabilities in the unconventional realm.

Another issue with military strategy is the differences in rules of engagement (ROEs) for different troop-contributing countries. This allows the Taliban to use the ROE limitations and national caveats specific to one nation's troops against them. For example, some nations restrict their troops' operations to daylight hours, while others

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[283] The scale shows the rating average of respondents; e.g., "lack of intelligence" obtained an average rating of approximately 3.7 out of 6 and thus ranked as the highest. The equipment shortfalls mentioned include equipment shortages for the indigenous forces as well as NATO. For details see: Katzman.

[284] Sepp.

[285] Ibid.

forbid activities during snow.[286] In short, there is a strong need to design a military strategy that is less oriented toward direct action, accommodates local sensitivities, and does not create internal bureaucratic dilemmas in execution.

4.　　Problems with Local Security Forces

Pashtun society is highly xenophobic because of its culture and history, and usually treats outsiders with suspicion. A strong foreign footprint at different levels of the government hierarchy creates additional problems for the COIN effort. Even on the Pakistani side, the Pakistani Army, mostly recruited from outside the tribal areas, is at a disadvantage when compared to the Frontier Corps or local *Khassadar* (tribal levies or police).　However, these local forces suffer from equipment shortages and training inadequacies, although efforts are underway to rectify the situation. Similar problems of equipment shortages exist for the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. This necessitates a rapid build up and strengthening of legitimate local security forces. [287]

There has been some progress in the development of ANA and ANP, yet their growth is slower than desired and beset with problems. The ANA trains mainly in the image of the U.S. Army as a conventional force,[288] but its immediate role is against an unconventional enemy. Its units still depend on embedded trainers, especially for coordination of air strikes. For example, Giustozzi notes that

> The fighting tactics that ANA officers have been learning from their trainers are largely based on American tactics; the infantry's main task is to force the enemy to reveal itself, allowing the air force to wipe it out

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[286] Katzman, 30.

[287] Hassan Abbas, "Transforming Pakistan's Frontier Corps," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 6 (March 29, 2007), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370292 (accessed September 21, 2007). . There are some current plans for U.S. trainers to conduct training of the FC units. See David Montero, "U.S. Military Prepares to Train Pakistani Forces," *The Christian Science Monitor,* April 16, 2008, http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0416/p99s01-duts.html (accessed April 19, 2008).

[288] Sepp.

with air strikes. There is little evidence that ANA units would be able to control the battlefield without such air support, or that they are learning the necessary skills.[289]

Moreover, the ANA and ANP are insufficient, as in most of the districts with an average population of over 30,000 people, only 20 to 30 ANP personnel are available.[290] The Taliban stir up xenophobic sentiments against foreign security forces to their own advantage.

5.   Cultural and Political Issues

The Taliban insurgency has ethnic and tribal underpinnings,[291] but the COIN strategies to counter it do not fully consider this. Since its creation under Ahmad Shah Durrani, Afghanistan has been ruled by Pashtuns except for two brief periods in 1928 (rule of *Bachai-Saqao*) and 1993 (presidency of Professor Rabbani).[292] In the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan, there is still a strong perception that the Pashtuns are sidelined in the political and government process, despite the fact that the president is a Pashtun[293] and the expansion of Pashtun cabinet membership.[294] The perceived unequal representation of Pashtuns in the military officer corps[295] and the government hierarchy, coupled with the questionable history of some key personalities in the Karzai

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289 Antonio Giustozzi, "Afghanistan's National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanization," *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 9 (May 1, 2008), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374139 (accessed May 3, 2008).

290 Waliullah Rahmani, "Farah Province: The New Focus of the Taliban Insurgency," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 23 (December 10, 2007), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373844 (accessed April 10, 2008).

291 Johnson and Mason, *Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan*.

292 Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Tribes, Traditions and Two Tragedies," *Asia Times* (2003), http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EI12Ak03.html (accessed October 25, 2007).

293 *Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003), http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/asia/afghanistan_southasia/reports/A401078_05082003.pdf (accessed May 1, 2007).

294 Bhadrakumar.

295 Giustozzi, Afghanistan's National Army: The Ambiguous Prospects of Afghanistan.

government[296] further aggravate the problem. The predominately Pashtun Taliban use the perceived hegemony of non-Pashtuns to gain popular support among the Pashun population.

Another issue strongly linked to the cultural problem is the imposition of an alien form of democracy and strong central government on Pashtun tribal structure. The current political strategy tries to "extend the reach of the central government, which simply foments insurgency among a proto-insurgent people."[297] The premise of the strategy hinges on the mistaken notion that the majority of Pashtun tribal areas are "ungoverned"[298] and aims to force a system of governance alien to the Pashtunwali culture that itself is "an alternative form of social organization with an advanced conflict resolution mechanism."[299] This strategy gives the Taliban widespread acceptance, as the Taliban are seen as defenders of the traditional Pashtun way of life despite their radical religious agendas. There is, therefore, a need to reconstruct traditional Pashtun tribal structures from the inside out on both sides of the border rather than force a new form of administration without adequate transition.

6. Economic Issues

Economic progress and development should be the cornerstone of any COIN effort. Lack of significant economic change in the lives of the people in the Pashtun belt leaves much to be desired.[300]http://newsblaze.com/story/20061010224125rahu.nb/topstory.html The pace of reconstruction in Afghanistan and FATA is very slow, which challenges the

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[296] Some members of Afghan government have a dubious past as warlords, the very people against whom Taliban were initially able to rouse the Pashtun population. For details see "Key Afghan Players: Who's Who," BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3706370.stm (accessed May 12, 2007).

[297] Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign Until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan Afghanistan Frontier," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008), 1.

[298] Ibid., 12-13.

[299] Ibid., 20.

[300] Rahul K. Bhonsle, "Taliban Strategy in Afghanistan," *News Blaze,* October 10, 2006, http://newsblaze.com/story/20061010224125rahu.nb/topstory.html (accessed May 10, 2007).

credibility of the Coalition and the international community.[301] The Taliban take advantage of the situation to further their influence in the underdeveloped countryside. In areas where there has been progress, the reconstruction effort is mainly reliant upon NGOs who generally hire foreign workers for most of the work,[302] creating resentment among a population suffering for lack of economic opportunity.

On the military side of development activities, the PRTs started out as a good step. However, their local outreach, especially in the Pashtun belt, is limited by their small numbers, weak projection capabilities, and failed attempts to implement reconstruction from the provincial level.[303] The PRTs cannot fully grasp the needs and ground-level realities of the rural population and are unable to link the development works to the military or IO pillars of the campaign.

Narcotics elimination is a major concern, especially for the European NATO Coalition partners in Afghanistan, obviously due to associated domestic political issues and the fact that a significant portion of narcotics income goes to the Taliban. However, uneven opium eradication policies are inconsistent with the fact that currently more than 35 percent of the Afghan national economy depends on opium.[304] Thus, attempts to eradicate crops, without providing alternate livelihoods or targeting drug kingpins, will only endanger the frail Afghan economy.[305] Moreover, the "aggressive pursuit of eradication has alienated many peasant farmers and resulted in some of them turning

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[301] Since 2001, the international community delivered only $15 billion out of $25 billion pledged, and from that, over 40 percent can be termed as "phantom aid" as it goes back to the donor countries. See "Report: Forty Percent of Afghan Aid Spent on Foreign Workers," CNN, http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/03/25/afghanistan.aid.waste.ap/index.html (accessed April 15, 2008).

[302] Ibid.

[303] Johnson and Mason, *No Sign Until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan Afghanistan Frontier,* 35.

[304] John A. Glaze, *Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counter-Narcotics Strategy* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute; U.S. Army War College, 2007), http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub804.pdf (accessed April 1, 2008).

[305] Hayder Mili and Jacob Townsend, "Afghanistan's Drug Trade and how it Funds Taliban Operations," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 9 (May 10, 2007), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373383 (accessed February 11, 2008).

against U.S. and NATO forces."[306] This situation allows the Taliban to emerge as the "protectors of the farmers" and strengthening their control over the area.

D.   TALIBAN ADAPTATION TO COIN STRATEGIES

Despite Coalition efforts, the Taliban continue to survive and grow. They conduct a resilient defensive insurgency in which they have traded space and time to rebuild their combat power and control. This is based on their ability to adapt their methods and mechanisms in response to the loss of personnel, equipment, geography and other resources. An anonymous Coalition field operative interviewed for this study said that the Taliban are "more adaptive than what we thought they would be. The name [Taliban] represents a completely different threat then it did in 2002. Every factor, other than its hate for Coalition presence, has changed." This section analyzes some key adaptive trends apparent in the Taliban.

1.   Organization

The Taliban exhibit an enormous ability to transform their organizational structure rapidly to suit the environment. The Taliban today are different from their pre 9/11 organization.[307] Instead of a rigid, micromanaged, and centrally controlled hierarchy, the organization is flatter, decentralized and composed of dispersed networks of "Taliban franchises." Essentially, they have changed from a semi-conventional mobile army relying on light cavalry tactics to an unconventional insurgent force using guerilla tactics.[308] The decentralization of decision-making allows the Taliban commanders to get inside the Coalition forces' Observe, Orientate, Decide, Act (OODA) loop[309] by

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[306] Glaze, 10.

[307] Some observers use the term "neo-Taliban" to describe the Taliban today without consensus on the exact definition of the term. See Antonio Giustozzi, "The Resurgence of the Neo-Taliban," *Open Democracy* (December 14, 2007), http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/conflicts/democracy_terror/neo_taliban (accessed April 30, 2008).

[308] Antonio Giustozzi quoted in Ron Synovitz, "Afghanistan: Taliban Evolves into Network of Groups," Radio Free Europe, http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2008/04/eae848e5-e3af-49b8-9d6d-d27ba748f251.html (accessed April 29, 2008).

[309] The OODA loop, conceptualized by U.S. Air Force Colonel John Boyd, consists of four overlapping and interacting processes. For details see Chet Richards, "John Boyd's OODA Loop," Defense and National Interest, http://www.d-n-i.net/boyd/boyds_ooda_loop.ppt (accessed April 11, 2008).

shortening their own. The situation is typified in a comment by one of the interviewees for this study: "They [Taliban] act, we react, they counteract; the cycle continues." The network organization bases itself on a "scale-free network" model where some commanders (nodes) have many connections to other nodes while most nodes only have a handful.[310] Another major adaptation in the Taliban organization involves recruitment. Traditionally, the Taliban were a Ghilzai Pashtun-led radical movement with most members being former *madrassa* students. Lately the Taliban have shifted to a wider intake, encompassing people from all Pashtun tribal groups and even some other ethnic minorities.[311] The organization appears to "incorporate new constituencies and, therefore, represent different tribes and communities. So as their constituencies change, they also adapt to those constituencies."[312] Instead of ideological indoctrination, the recruitment process now hinges on the disaffection of locals, *badal*, and financial benefits. The trend shows that the Taliban can gradually become a bigger phenomenon outside ethnic boundaries while maintaining their Pashtun credentials. Overall, the Taliban organization seems able to change its shape to suit the environment unless its key survival channel, the support of population, is challenged.

2.   Kinetic Methods

Taliban kinetic methods have undergone a major transformation since 9/11. In addition to being better equipped, their tactics, techniques, and procedures have clearly changed in response to Coalition military strategies and TTPs. The Taliban have shifted from semi-conventional light cavalry tactics to insurgent guerilla tactics based on a suitable combination of direct and indirect means. Their TTPs appear to be significantly influenced by Iraqi insurgents[313] which can probably be linked to their Al Qaeda liaison

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[310] The main reason for this is that potential members of the insurgency favor joining already established and "famous" groups. For a detailed concept of scale free networks see Albert-László Barabási and Eric Bonabeau, "Scale-Free Networks," *Scientific American* (May 2003), 52, http://www.nd.edu/~networks/Publication%20Categories/01%20Review%20Articles/ScaleFree_Scientific%20Ameri%20288,%2060-69%20(2003).pdf (accessed April 11, 2008).

[311] Giustozzi, *The Resurgence of the Neo-Taliban*.

[312] Synovitz.

[313] Omid Marzban, "Taliban Shift Tactics in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Focus* 3, no. 15 (April 18, 2006), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369961 (accessed April 1, 2008).

and training. A respondent to the survey done by the authors says that the Taliban "use OEF and OIF like we use JRTC and NTC." The TTP adaptation comes in part from slow changes in Coalition TTPs. Slow changes give the Taliban ample opportunity to devise countermeasures without being seriously hampered in their performance. The results of the adapted TTPs are clearly seen in the shift of their preferred types of targets and methods of attack over time, as shown in Figure 39 below. The Taliban have greatly increased their attacks on the security forces and government apparatus while civilian attacks almost remain unchanged. The methods of attack have also shifted considerably towards suicide bombing. This clearly illustrates the Taliban's preference a typical insurgent approach, targeting government structures using minimum resources to maintain control of the population while producing maximum psychological effect. They have opted for IEDs and suicide bombings as force-multipliers because of the disproportionate casualties suffered during direct attacks.[314]

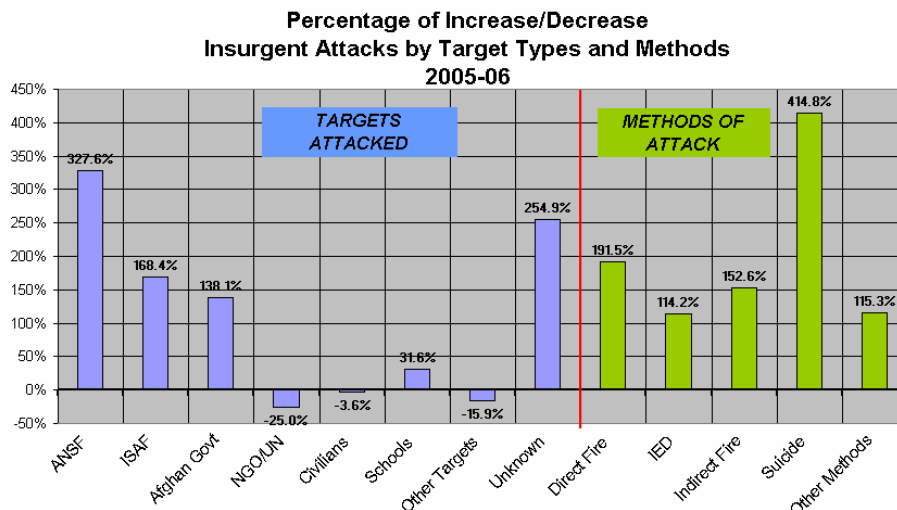Figure 39.   Shift in Taliban Targets and Methods of Attack[315]

Another major adaptation in Taliban kinetic operations is better tactical patience, operational security, and improved planning mechanisms compared with earlier displays of reckless personal bravery. This demonstrates a high learning curve at all tiers of

[314] Giustozzi, *The Resurgence of the Neo-Taliban.*

[315] Derived from Cordesman.

Taliban leadership. As noted above, their planning and TTPs aim to exploit the Coalition TTPs. They observe the modus operandi of the Coalition forces keenly, deduce the limits on the different nations' rules of engagement and sensitivities, and use these limitations effectively. The Taliban also take into account the rotation schedules of Coalition units for planning their operations. According to a survey participant, the Taliban

> know that the first two to three months after deployment are situational building phase, time to exploit their [Coalition] stupidity; followed by a fighting stage; followed by a heavy CA and development phase and a few collateral damages; followed by a cautious phase by the upper [Coalition] commands because of bad press; followed by a final push, then a cautious time as the year tour finishes.

Therefore, it is clear that the Taliban show great potential for transformation vis-à-vis Coalition military strategies and TTPs and will continue to outwit the security forces unless some major change is made in the overall strategy.

3.   Non-kinetic Methods

Probably the biggest adaptation the Taliban demonstrate is in the realm of indirect or non-kinetic methods. From a media shy, almost stubborn outfit that shunned all forms of technology, they have become a politically savvy organization exhibiting great media skills. Instead of taking the support of the populace for granted, they have adapted to influence it with a very efficient information campaign. General David Richard acknowledged their effectiveness when he remarked, "In all my 36 years [of service] I've never seen a more sophisticated propaganda machine as the Taliban."[316] The Taliban IO campaign uses a wide spectrum of radio, internet,[317] music, audio and video CDs, posters, night letters, and word of mouth, all skillfully integrating religious references, Pashtun history, and cultural sensitivities. This is in stark contrast with the pre 9/11 Taliban who used as their mouthpiece only the unattractive broadcasts of *Radio Sharia*.

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316 Bill Graveland, "Canadians Battling Taliban Propaganda," Canadian Television CTV, http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20061204/afghanistan_media_061204?s_name=&no_ads= (accessed April 13, 2007).

317 Foxley, 6-7.

The Taliban media arm is now proactive and often plans media statements before operations,[318] thereby beating the Coalition IO in the "battle of the story."[319]

The Taliban also show considerable survival potential in establishing an underground parallel governing apparatus. They counter government political outreach by denying the government machinery presence through physical and intimidation attacks. Their system of governance thus gains more legitimacy as it can deliver speedier justice and security in accordance with cultural norms while promising some social services, like schools.[320] Also on the political side, they have tried to gain legitimacy internationally as a power-in-being by conducting hostage release negotiations with Italy, Germany and Korea. This, coupled with their efforts to project a softer image as evident in the 2006 directive to Taliban field commanders, aims to erase their legacy of brutality. Similarly, they have tried, at least publicly, to distance themselves from Al Qaeda, probably to gain acceptance outside their traditional realm.

The Taliban stance on some key issues also shows signs of adaptation. For example, before 9/11, the Taliban strictly banned music, CD shops, television, and internet, but now use those same media to propagate their messages. It is unclear if this is due to a change in basic ideals of the organization or temporary necessity. Similarly, they have almost reversed their stand on poppy cultivation, which they earlier declared to be un-Islamic.[321] Another example is acceptance of suicide attacks as a major tool, in contrast to the Islamic and Pashtun cultural values.[322] Likewise, the Taliban media outlets now occasionally attempt to project the movement at extra-regional aims, which

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[318] Stone.

[319] For example, the Taliban made an international press release of the shooting down of a NATO CH 47 Chinook helicopter near Kajaki in May 2006, several hours before any NATO press statement. See "NATO Chinook Shot Down," *The Australian,* May 31, 2007, http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21824791-601,00.html (accessed January 10, 2008).

[320] Noor Khan, "Taliban to Open Schools in Afghanistan," *Washington Post,* January 22, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/21/AR2007012100165.html (accessed May 2, 2008).

[321] Mili and Townsend.

[322] Pascale Combelles Siegel, "Taliban Graduation Ceremony Demonstrates Change of Tactics," *Terrorism Focus* 4, no. 21 (July 3, 2007), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373516 (accessed February 11, 2008).

contrasts with the earlier confinement within Afghanistan.[323] These examples show that the Taliban are gradually adapting and compromising some of their fundamental values in order to gain influence.

E.   TALIBAN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

To assess strengths and weaknesses of the Taliban organization, the authors use their survey in conjunction with key themes from their interviews and field experience. This discussion of the Taliban's strengths and weaknesses is the basis for the recommendations in Chapter VII.

1.   Strengths

When asked for their perception of Taliban strengths, most survey participants from the Coalition forces rated the Taliban's ability to use human terrain as their foremost strength (See Figure 40 below). The Taliban's center of gravity lies in their appeal and legitimacy to the rural Pashtun population based on religious sentiments, ethnic connections, dislike of foreigners and the government's failure to provide security, speedy justice and economic opportunities. In the words of a veteran Mujhaideen leader, "If the Taliban has any chance, it is because they are a very attractive alternative for the Afghan people. They are several times more appealing to the Afghan people than the Afghan government."[324] Their deep knowledge of human terrain also facilitates excellent HUMINT through a grassroots network of auxiliaries.

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[323] Rahimullah Yousufzai maintains that this trend is a cosmetic effort to obtain sponsorship from mainly Arab militant financiers whose attention is currently fixated on Iraq. See: Daan Van Der Schriek, "Weaker but Not Wiser: The Taliban Today," *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 1 (January 13, 2005), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369093 (accessed March 11, 2008).

[324] Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad quoted in Waliullah Rahmani,"Afghanistan's Veteran Jihadi Leader: An Interview with Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad," *Spotlight on Terror* 4, no. 1 (May 3, 2007), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373371 (accessed May 11, 2007).
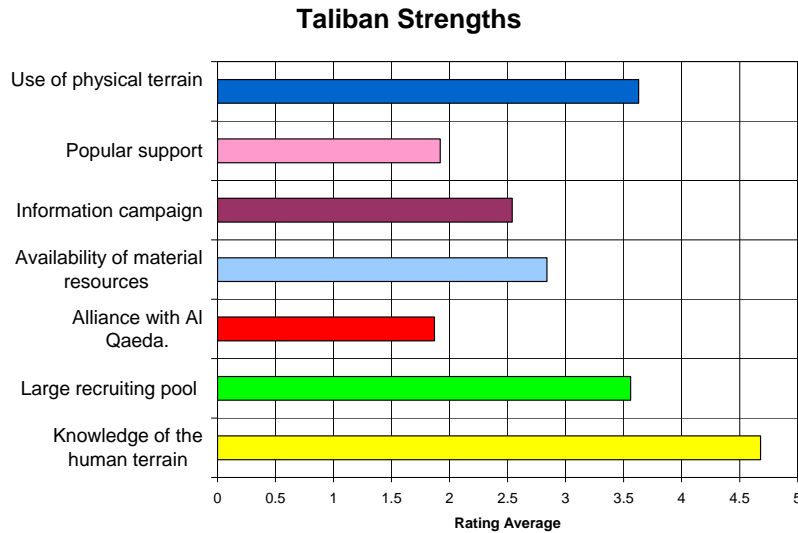
Taliban Strengths

Figure 40.   Perceptions of Taliban Strengths

Closely related to their understanding of human terrain is their excellent IO capability, which is a sustaining pillar of the Taliban. Lately, Taliban wield this instrument of power to great effect.

Another major Taliban strength is their ability to draw upon a vast recruiting pool to fill the gaps in their ranks. Recruits include large numbers of students from pro-Taliban Madrassahs as well as disaffected youth and tribesmen wanting revenge after being estranged by collateral damage or security forces' cultural insensitivity. No amount of direct kill-capture missions will seriously hurt the movement; such missions create more Taliban recruits.

Availability of an ideal physical geography for guerilla operations is another plus. Remote countryside with meager communications infrastructure automatically lends itself to creation of small isolated pockets that preserve the Taliban organization against the top-down COIN approach.

The Taliban rely on abundant material resources to sustain their insurgency. Besides donations, diverted charities and extortion money, revenue from poppy cultivation and smuggling contributes to the movement's ability to continue the fight. The large number of weapon caches and abundance of weapons in the Pashtun society

also are a source of strength for the insurgent organization. Their loose alliance with *jihadi* networks provides money, training and equipment.

The Taliban organizational structure is a strength. Their decentralized, grassroots, network-styled organization provides great irregular warfare capability because of easy passage of information and coordination. The "scale-free" network, as highlighted above, allows the organization to accommodate accidental failure or countermeasures.[325]

Probably one of their biggest strengths is the ability to sustain the insurgency by using time and patience as force multipliers. This ability comes partly from the Pashtun culture, where feuds and enmities span generations, and partly from the lack of a pressing timeline from the government. By demonstrating their persistence, they intimidate locals from cooperating with foreign forces by implying a long-term enmity once the Coalition forces depart. The Taliban can continue fighting a defensive insurgency, needing to remain on the battlefield only until Coalition forces leave and they can stage a full-scale return.

2.   Weaknesses

Probably the biggest weakness of the Taliban organization is the use of violence and intimidation to keep the population in line. The Taliban aim to overcome this weakness by creating popular appeal through their IO campaign. The use of intimidation tactics creates vulnerability for the Taliban if the Coalition forces capable of providing a modicum of long-term security in return for local cooperation. Most survey respondents considered this the greatest Taliban vulnerability (Figure 41 below).

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[325] Barabási and Bonabeau, 57.

Taliban Weaknesses
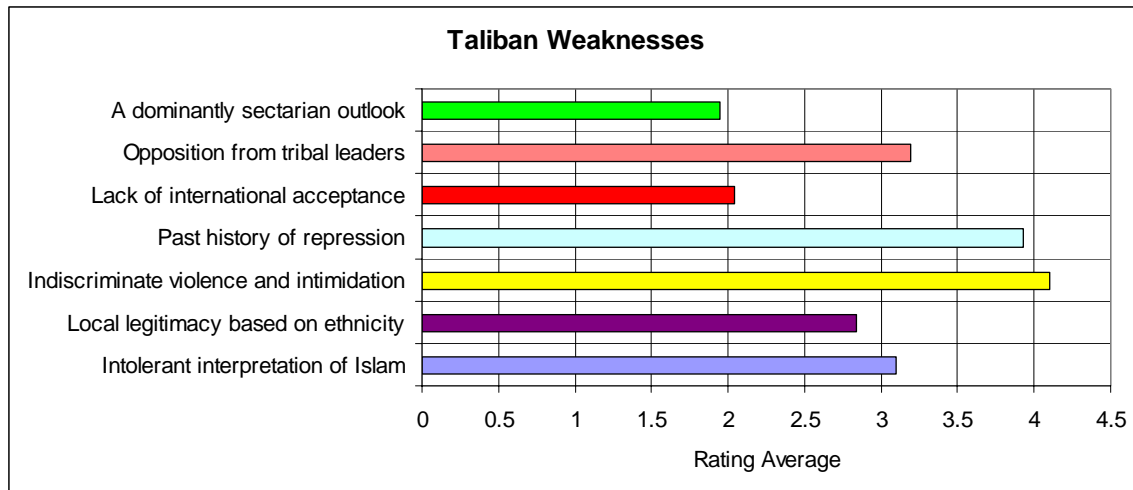
Figure 41.   Perceptions of Taliban Weaknesses

The Taliban have an unenviable legacy of repressive rule, although their IO campaign tries to glorify their time in power. Their legacy can make people unfavorable to a reenactment of Taliban rule, a vulnerability for the organization.

Despite their deep understanding of the human terrain, the Taliban challenge the traditional tribal structures of the Pashtun by shifting power from the elders to the clergy and the youth. This creates innate resentment from the tribal elders and *maliks,* some of whom consider the Taliban a long-term threat to the tribal institutions. [326]

The Taliban interpretation of Islam is not in harmony with the Afghan Islamic tradition, nor does it coincide with most of the regional ethnic groups' more tolerant views. This gives the Afghanistan and Pakistan security forces, who can legitimately discuss the issues as fellow Muslims, opportunities for turning the population against the Taliban.

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[326] Reportedly, more than 200 tribal elders who resisted Taliban domination were killed by the militants in 2005 and 2006. See Johnson and Mason, *No Sign Until the Burst of Fire*, 15.

Coupled with their religious interpretation is the Taliban's dominantly sectarian outlook and alliance with extremist sectarian outfits like Sipah-e-Sahaba,[327] which seriously hampers their ability to expand into other ethnic and sectarian communities.

A similar organizational weakness is over-reliance on ethnic and tribal connections that provides strength at the local level but hampers expansion beyond tribal and ethnic groups. This phenomenon is visible in the distribution of security incidents among various ethnic groups (Figure 42 below) and Pashtun tribal groups (Figure 43 below). It is clear from these figures that the Taliban are most active in the Pashtun dominated areas and within the Ghilzai and Karlanri tribal groups in particular. The mainly Pashtun nature of Taliban, and a high concentration of Ghilzais in its top leadership circles, inhibits lateral expansion into tribal and ethnic communities who opt for government presence. On the other hand, the reliance on tribal connections raises the possibility of clan and factional infighting within the organization, especially in cases that require allegiance to commanders from rival clans.
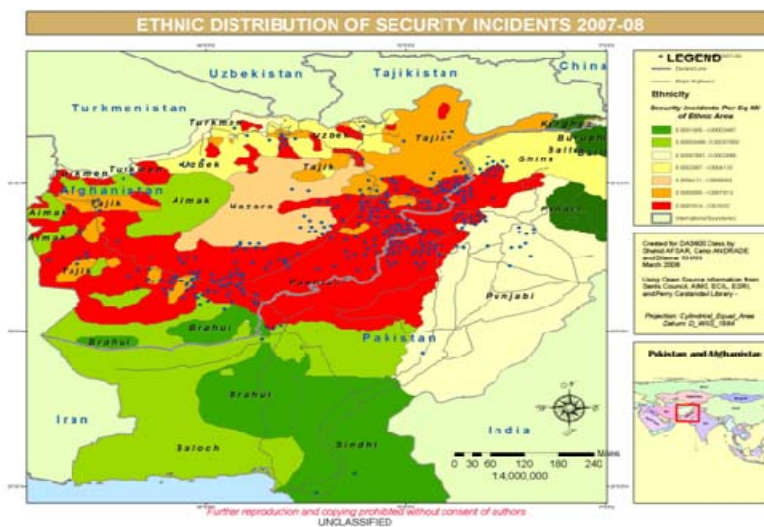
Figure 42.   Ethnic Distribution of Security Incidents 2007-08 [328]

[327] Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan is a Sunni militant sectarian organization that primarily targets Shia Muslims. It operates mainly in Pakistan and Afghanistan and was banned by the Pakistani government in January 2002 as a terrorist outfit. For details see "Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/Ssp.htm (accessed April 11, 2008).

[328] Shahid Afsar, *Distribution of Security Incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2007-08* (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2008). Incident data derived from "Senlis Maps," The Senlis Council-Security and Development Policy Group; http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/maps (accessed March 1, 2008).

Figure 43.   Distribution of Security Incidents within Pashtun Tribal Groups[329]
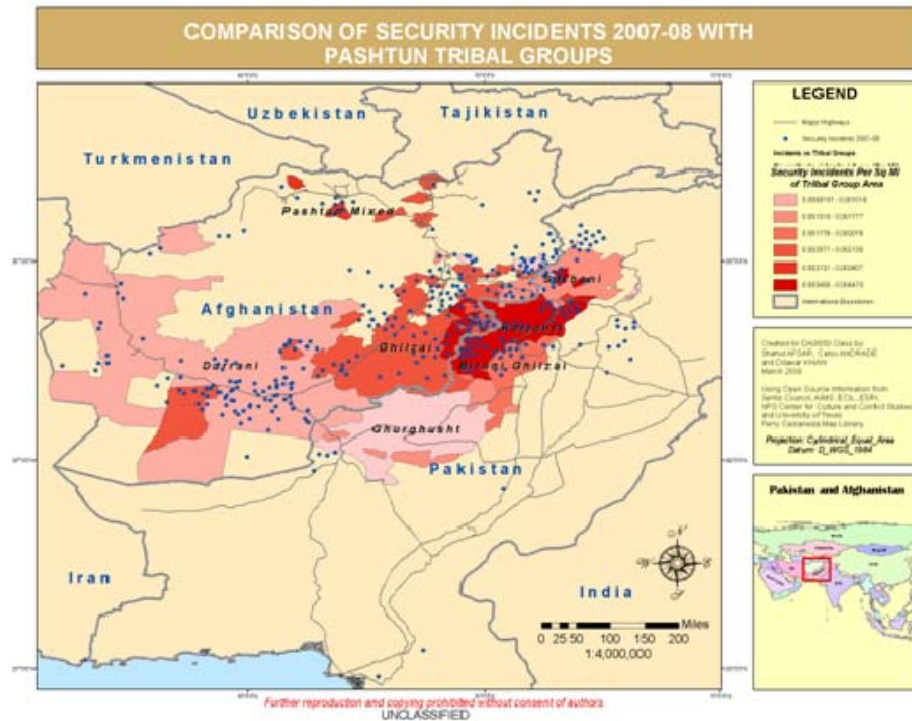
The Taliban insurgency's tribal nature contradicts its purportedly religious focus and its claim to transcend tribal and ethnic boundaries, thereby raising questions about its basic stance.[330] Rahimullah Yousufzai highlights the issue.

> The Taliban and other jihad advocates often claim that they believe in the concept of a common Muslim ummah (community) and reject the division of their religion into groups based on ethnicity, language, geographical borders and tribes. In practice, this is easier said than done. In tribal societies such as that of the Pashtuns inhabiting Pakistan and Afghanistan, even ideologically-driven radical Taliban and jihadist fighters gravitate toward their own tribe and local commander whether fighting U.S.-led Coalition forces or the armed forces of Pakistan.[331]

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[329] Shahid Afsar, *Distribution of Security Incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2007-08* (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2008). Incident data derived from "Senlis Maps," The Senlis Council-Security and Development Policy Group; http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/maps (accessed March 1, 2008).

[330] Smith, Talking to the Taliban.

[331] Rahimullah Yusufzai, "The Impact of Pashtun Tribal Differences on the Pakistani Taliban," *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 3 (February 7, 2008), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373954 (accessed February 11, 2008).

The lack of international support and recognition of the Taliban due to their assumed association with terror networks is a disadvantage for the organization in the international arena. Their association with terrorism raises serious questions about the Taliban's chances for acceptance should they wish to acquire official power at some stage, and creates problems for any negotiated settlement, as most nations will probably not negotiate openly with a group labeled as terrorist sponsors.

F.   THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE TALIBAN: STRATEGIC OPTIONS

This section considers some of the strategic measures that the Taliban might use to their benefit. This description of possible strategic options is based almost wholly on an "enemy courses of action" analysis by the authors and is neither definite nor conclusive. Some of these measures have already started to emerge, while others may never become manifest.

Probably the best course of action for the Taliban is to strike at the fabric of Coalition and force it to break apart.[332] They have been attempting to do so by specifically targeting members of some Coalition nations in an effort to influence their domestic public sentiment and force them to withdraw their troops. This in turn creates a diplomatic and political rift within the Coalition.

Another critical step by the Taliban might be targeting the Coalition lines of communication running through Pakistan.[333] This could entail physical attacks on the logistic routes like those already emerging,[334] or creating serious rifts between Pakistan on the one hand, and the U.S. and Afghanistan on the other. The Taliban could easily incite NATO and U.S. forces into military operations inside Pakistan, with or without Pakistani approval. This would de-legitimize the Pakistani government in the eyes of its people, making the Taliban appeal to religious and nationalist sentiments even more

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[332] Siegel.

[333] Andrew McGregor, "Targeting the Khyber Pass: The Taliban's Spring Offensive," *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 7 (April 3, 2008), http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374076 (accessed April 17, 2008).

[334] Some analysts maintain that one of the main target of 2008 Taliban offensive will be the Khyber Pass, linking Pakistan and Afghanistan. For details, see McGregor.

attractive. Recent media statements by top ranking U.S. officials and politicians threatening attacks inside Pakistani territory, along with past instances of alleged U.S. strikes inside Pakistan, have already created an environment conducive to Taliban IO success.[335] Widespread instability in Pakistan resulting from such a misadventure would prove disastrous, as new recruits spanning a much larger and technologically developed support base would join the Taliban and Al Qaeda and deny access to the main logistic route for NATO and U.S. forces in Afghanistan.[336] The same instability might also lead to a much wider regional conflict, sucking in more countries to the detriment of world peace. The Taliban could probably also use a similar strategy to instigate active hostilities between Iran and the U.S.

The current flow of resources to the insurgency and the perception of their likely success increase the chances of a regional expansion of the Taliban despite ethnic barriers. The perceived Taliban success against Coalition forces might encourage like-minded militant groups outside the Pashtun belt to associate themselves temporarily with the Taliban, even if they do not share their ultimate aims. Such groups might therefore allow expansion of sympathetic intelligence and logistics networks extending outside areas of active insurgency. An analysis of recent Taliban night letters points to the possibility that "the Afghan insurgency might very well be morphing into a campaign with more transnational concerns."[337]

An alternative possibility is transformation of the Taliban into a nationalist movement seeking power on both sides of the border by invoking images of past Pashtun grandeur and portraying the current conflict in a Pashtun vs non-Pashtun paradigm. The mainly Pashtun composition of the Taliban will certainly help in this regard. This scenario would create a host of problems for regional stability for obvious reasons.

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[335] Eric Schmitt, "Pakistan Warns U.S. on Attacking Al Qaeda on its Own," *The New York Times,* January 12, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/12/washington/12pakistan.html?ref=world (accessed February 12, 2008).

[336] Ibid.

[337] Johnson, *The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters)*, 331.

The 2009 national elections in Afghanistan will be a milestone, as the conduct and outcome of the elections will determine the Taliban's chance of success. To show their hold on the Afghan countryside, the movement will likely try to directly or indirectly disrupt the elections.[338] Another possible strategy for the Taliban in this regard might be to covertly insert and support their own candidates to take on the system from within while continuing to wage the insurgency.

Another potential scenario for the Taliban organization projects in-fighting among factions as the insurgency grows and local leaders gain strength and clout. In the absence of a rigid conventional organizational structure, and given the nature of Pashtun tribal relations, this is very much a possibility. Some signs of this have already appeared, as factions claiming to be loosely aligned with the Taliban but more or less pursuing their own methods have begun to surface. If this trend continues, it could lead to Taliban disintegration into smaller factions, as happened with their predecessors, the Mujahideen of the Russo Afghan War.

G.   CONCLUSION

The Taliban appear to be a self-sustaining organization that is becoming stronger by generating effects that feed back into its resource base. This dynamic organization has adapted well to various COIN strategies.   Though it faces several hurdles, the organization will likely survive and eventually control much of its support base if Coalition strategies do not change. A new strategic approach is needed that takes into account the Taliban's strengths and weaknesses. To this end, the next chapter presents broad recommendations for evolving a strategy to counter the Taliban's strengths and exploit their weaknesses while attacking critical enabling linkages.

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[338] David Lamm, Colonel (Retired), former Chief of Staff to Lieutenant General (Retired) David Barno at the Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan; Interview by authors. Written notes; Washington, D.C.; November 19, 2007.

VII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> Over the last few decades, regular armed forces – including some of the largest and best – have repeatedly failed in numerous low-intensity conflicts where they seemed to hold all the cards. This should have caused politicians, the military, and their academic advisors to take a profound new look at the nature of war in our time; however, by and large no such attempt at reevaluation was made. — Martin Van Creveld[339]

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents recommendations to help the Coalition Force defeat the Taliban insurgency. The recommended strategies have two preconditions or overarching principles necessary for the success of any counterinsurgency effort: make the population the center of gravity, and adopt an oil spot counterinsurgency strategy.[340] The chapter provides four strategies that focus on attacking and severing the Taliban's critical linkages, given their identified strengths and weaknesses. These strategies are (1) Input Denial, (2) Counter Production, (3) Counter Output/Force, and (4) Counter Authority. The authors provide recommendations for implementing these strategies based on personal experience, introspection, a survey of field operatives, COIN theory and history. The goal is to discern what might transform current disjointed strategies into a cohesive approach that is based upon the enemy, rather than on matters like the available forces, national caveats and confusing command structures. A unified effort to counter the

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[339] Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 222.

[340] The oil spot strategy (sometimes called the ink spot strategy) is a method for countering an insurgency in a large hostile region with a relatively small force. First, the red (insurgent controlled), pink (contested), and white (government controlled) areas must be identified across the region. The COIN force starts by establishing a number of small safe areas dispersed over the region in the pink or red areas identified as most crucial. It then pushes out from each area, extending its control and expanding the areas until they eventually merge, leaving only pockets of resistance. The name of the strategy refers how oil or ink spots spread on a piece of blotting paper or tissue. This approach to COIN is described in detail in a later section of this chapter.

enemy's production mechanism[341] is the way forward for Coalition forces operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The chapter also explains the thesis's limitations and explores opportunities to expand on this research.

B.   SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

There are two preconditions for Coalition forces to implement the recommended strategies. The first condition is to "truly"[342] make the population the center of gravity of the COIN effort. The second, given the limits on resources, personnel and equipment, is to implement a so-called "oil spot" approach.

The first theoretical principle of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies is that the support of the population is the most sought after commodity. The population must be considered the center of gravity. Without popular support, neither the insurgent nor counterinsurgent can further their legitimacy.[343] The Taliban surely know this and the majority of Coalition field operators surveyed are well aware of the principle (Figure 45 below). While the IROA, Pakistan, NATO/ISAF and the U.S. do state that the population is the center of gravity, their actions are evidence to the contrary. Until Coalition forces internalize the principle at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, the fight will remain an uphill battle.

The second precondition for implementing the recommended strategies involves providing "genuine" security for the population. Galula's assertion that "[t]he minority [of the population] hostile to the insurgent will not and cannot emerge as long as the threat has not been lifted to a reasonable extent" must be a guiding principle of counterinsurgency strategy and tactics. Pakistan or the IROA can own the "hearts and minds" of portions of the public, yet not gain their support due to real or perceived Taliban threats. Given the limited number of trained security forces, it is difficult to

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[341] In the context of the Lietes and Wolf model, discussed in Chapters II and VI, the authors refer to the Taliban's production mechanism as the "pump."

[342] Although some nations within the Coalition have identified the population as the center of gravity for COIN operations, it is not commonly accepted by the soldiers on the ground, and research suggests that the COIN strategies are not being executed as such.

[343] Galula, 52.

protect all of Afghanistan and Pakistan from the Taliban. Hence, the relevance of the "oil blot" approach. If Coalition forces cannot hold the terrain, then the large-scale conventional operations discussed in previous chapters only alienate the population. Admitting that the Coalition forces cannot control the entire region round the clock is a bold departure from what is currently practiced, but essential to assure victory. Galula described victory in COIN this way:

> A victory is not the destruction in a given area of the insurgent's forces and his political organization . . . . [It is that] plus the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.[344]

C.   COUNTERING THE "SUPPLY PUMP"

As described in Chapter II, the Insurgency as a System model focuses on the supply side of insurgency and transforms inputs into outputs, thus promoting the actual or perceived authority of the rebels. This sustained authority provides the impetus of support from both internal and external sources and allows the insurgency to grow. Analysis of the Taliban using the Congruence model identifies their strengths and weaknesses. Considering these strengths and weaknesses, four overarching strategies (Figure 44 below) will counter or defeat the Taliban's "supply pump": (1) input denial; (2) counter production; (3) counter output/force; and (4) counter authority.[345]

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[344] Galula, 54.

[345] The strategies recommended in this thesis were conceived and adapted from three primary sources: (1) COIN Seminar at the United States Military Academy in March 2007, (2) the seminar on guerrilla warfare taught by Professor Gordon McCormick of the Naval Postgraduate School, and (3) the course on Contemporary Afghan Politics taught by Professor Thomas Johnson of the Naval Postgraduate School.
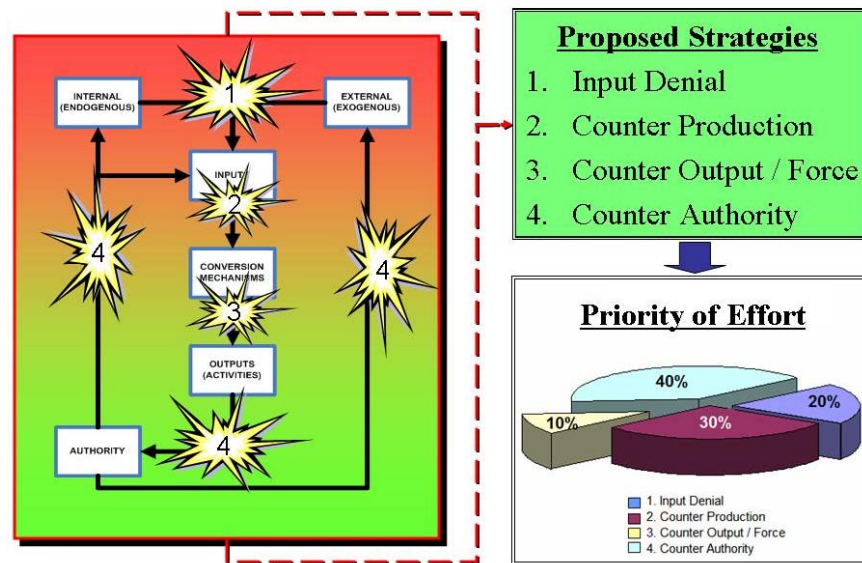
Countering the Pump

Figure 44.   Pump Destroying Strategies[346]

Critical linkages are key aspects of the organization that, if successfully countered, would render the organization ineffective. Figure 45 below highlights the most important ones as identified by the authors' survey of over 1,000 field operators with experience in Pakistan or Afghanistan, as well as the analysis of the Taliban's strengths and weaknesses. Access to the population, money and the command structure are of paramount importance, while weapons caches, ideology, refugee camps and outside TTPs are judged less important by survey respondents. Many of the Taliban's strengths correlate directly with these critical linkages. The four strategies described below aim to sever these critical linkages. Many of the recommendations to implement the proposed strategies are cross-cutting but are described only in the section on the most critical strategy.

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[346] The priorities depicted in this Figure are not based on a mathematical calculation; they represent the authors' sense of relative importance.

Critical Linkages for Taliban	Strengths	Weaknesses

Critical Linkages for Taliban (bar chart, Rating Average 0–5):
- Command structure
- Outside TTPs
- Refugee camps
- Madrassahs and Ideology
- Money
- Weapons
- Population Access

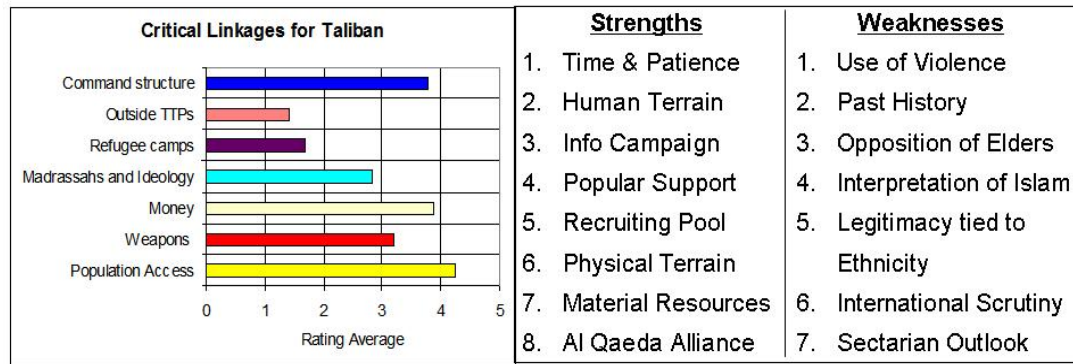| Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Time & Patience	1. Use of Violence
2. Human Terrain	2. Past History
3. Info Campaign	3. Opposition of Elders
4. Popular Support	4. Interpretation of Islam
5. Recruiting Pool	5. Legitimacy tied to Ethnicity
6. Physical Terrain	6. International Scrutiny
7. Material Resources	7. Sectarian Outlook
8. Al Qaeda Alliance	

Figure 45.   Critical Linkages, Strengths, Weaknesses of the Taliban

The survey participants were asked to prioritize COIN strategy methods. Figure 46 below identifies the recommended strategy for each method discussed in the survey. Popular support was considered the highest priority, with reconstruction, intelligence collection, and information operations following close behind. The top four methods are all viable methods of COIN strategy. Finishing out the list, in order, are targeting High Value Targets (HVTs), targeting sanctuary areas, isolating the population, killing or capturing insurgents, and reforming *madrassahs*. The authors conclude that isolating the population gets less emphasis than targeting HVTs and sanctuary areas because Coalition forces do not understand or do not value the oil spot approach.

Discussion of the four strategies includes, in each case, the target, the Taliban's critical linkages, strengths, weaknesses, and the recommended approach.
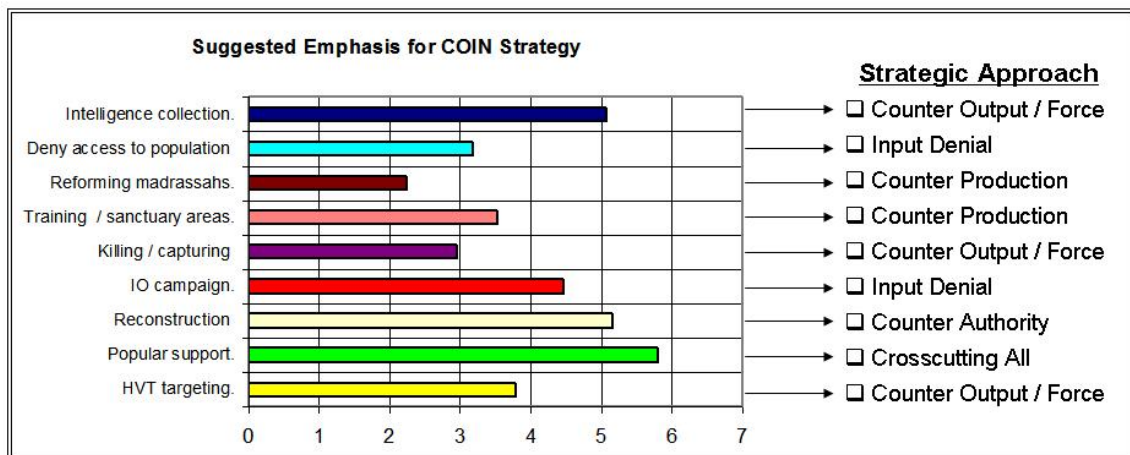

Suggested Emphasis for COIN Strategy (bar chart, 0–7) with **Strategic Approach**:
- Intelligence collection. → Counter Output / Force
- Deny access to population → Input Denial
- Reforming madrassahs. → Counter Production
- Training / sanctuary areas. → Counter Production
- Killing / capturing → Counter Output / Force
- IO campaign. → Input Denial
- Reconstruction → Counter Authority
- Popular support. → Crosscutting All
- HVT targeting. → Counter Output / Force

Figure 46.   Suggested Emphasis for COIN

1. **Input Denial Strategy**

   a) *Target*: The input denial strategy targets access to the population and available resources for the Taliban insurgency: people, weapons, equipment and money.

   b) *Taliban Critical Linkages, Strengths and Weaknesses*:

   The Taliban's access to the population and their ability to gain support using their understanding of human terrain, IO, religious sentiments, *pashtunwali*, intimidation, and by providing security and governance are the most important linkage. Not surprisingly, a large majority of survey participants share this view (Figure 45 above). The Taliban's access to refugee camps and other displaced populations is also important as a source of recruits. Refugee camps provide established links across tribal groups, appealing to the disaffected population adrift and without traditional support mechanisms.

   Taliban access to money and resources is another critical link in the insurgency. Because they can pay foot soldiers and acquire material resources, the organization can maintain and enhance its influence. The sources of Taliban funds, including narcotics, smuggling and diversion of charities must be taken into account. By severing these two critical linkages, the Coalition will significantly counter two of the Taliban's most important strengths: its recruiting pool and resources.

   c) *Recommended Approach:*

   The Taliban's access to the population can only be minimized by radically changing the current unsuccessful Coalition policy of trying to control the entire region. Galula's eight steps describe the mechanisms to implement the oil spot approach.[347]

   > 1. Concentrate enough armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents. (Surge)

   > 2. Detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose the insurgent's comeback in strength, install these troops in the villages and towns where the population lives. (Quarantine)

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[347] Galula, 55-56; variables added from a presentation by David Kilcullen, Counterinsurgency in Iraq: Theory and Practice, 2007 (power point presentation).

3. Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas. (Control or isolate)

4. Destroy the local insurgent political organizations. (Purge)

5. Set up, by means of elections and consensus, new local authorities. (Build)

6. Test these authorities through various concrete tasks replacing those who are incompetent. Organize self-defense units. (Test)

7. Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement. (Nationalize)

8. Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants. (Mop up)

The level of control and legitimacy within an area determines to what extent each of the eight steps must be employed. First, red (insurgent controlled), pink (contested), and white (government controlled) areas must be identified across the region by the Afghan and Pakistan governments.[348] Then the process of cordoning and slowly exterminating the Taliban's military and political arms must be executed by, with, and through the population and HN security forces.

The oil spot approach can be applied to the spiritual home of the Taliban's movement, Kandahar, as an example to briefly explain the methodology. Kandahar, a linchpin to the Taliban, is the best launching point for this strategy.[349] Refugee camps and other major population centers within Afghanistan, like Herat, Gereshk, Qalat, Ghazni, Jalalabad and Kunduz might also serve as commencement zones for the strategy. Figure 47 below depicts the three zones[350] necessary to fully secure and influence the area: the reconstruction zone (RZ), security and influence zone (SZ), and disruption zone (DZ). The RZ represents the focus for reconstruction activities. This zone should be selected for its popular support for the Afghan government and Coalition forces; it

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[348] Identification of red, pink, and white zones is beyond the scope of this thesis; it requires extensive research and critical decision making by the Afghan and Pakistani governments.

[349] This strategy would require that the Coalition forces recall the men, weapons and equipment spread throughout the country to the pink and red areas, which their governments have identified as most important.

[350] The concept of the urban oil spot approach is derived from Kilcullen. The Kandahar example is for illustrative purposes only; it does not represent the detailed planning required to implement this strategy.

becomes the main effort of PRT and reconstruction efforts. The area must be permanently garrisoned by security forces (e.g., ANP) that provide constant population protection and no kinetic operations without Afghan reconstruction office and PRT approval. The reconstruction zone should not be expanded until the area is fully secure.
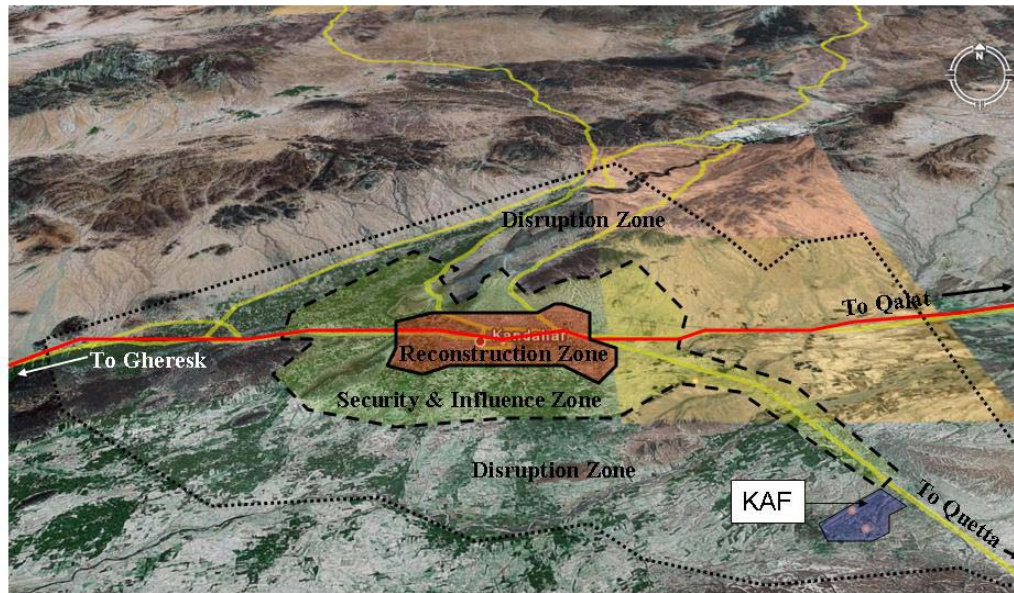
Urban Oil Spot Example: Kandahar

Figure 47. Kandahar Urban Oil Spot Example[351]

The second ring is the security and influence zone surrounding the RZ. This zone is the main effort of ANA and their Coalition partners; their mission is to protect the RZ from enemy infiltration. The population within this zone are kept under strict control and denied the benefits of the RZ. HN Joint Influence Teams[352] (JIT) operate in the SZ to influence the populace using the progress of the RZ as "object lessons" to persuade outlying village leaders to cooperate and sign up for RZ benefits. The outlying villages within the SZ must meet designated criteria[353] before they are eligible for reconstruction and development efforts. Once this criterion is met, the RZ expands into this zone.

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[351] Google Earth map of Kandahar, Afghanistan with RZ, SZ, and DZ zones depicted.

[352] HN Joint Influence Teams are Afghan led, Coalition resourced groups that influence the population with concentrated information operations.

[353] Criteria should include enemy activity reported, village elder and *shura* exercised control over the youth (especially fighting-age males), and no antigovernment or anti-Coalition activity.

The disruptive zone includes the remainder of the AOR. The DZ focuses on disrupting the enemy through intelligence-driven operations executed by ANA and Coalition forces SOF, thus keeping the Taliban off balance. With intelligence gathering the main effort within this zone, the Afghan government and Coalition forces could identify the next oil spot locations. The primary focus must be on HUMINT, with technical intelligence gathering tools used to add depth and redundancy. As security and stability prevail, the zones will continue to grow until oil spot regions are formed and most security can become the responsibility of the population and local civil defense or police forces.

Population control within the three zones depends upon cooperation and the security threat. The survey offered six possible methods of controlling the populace (Figure 48 below). Access control, checkpoints and a large concentration of security forces proved most important to operators. Mandatory national identification cards,[354] an accurate census of tribal areas and night curfews were rated fairly evenly. Banning weapons rated the lowest, due to Pashtun culture and existing laws and administrative arrangements.

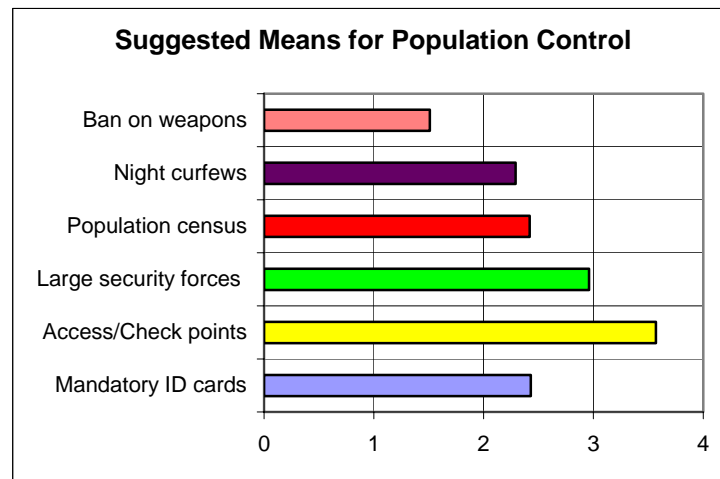**Suggested Means for Population Control**

Figure 48.   Suggested Means for Population Control

Severing the Taliban's access to resources, in part, lies in the control of the population. The resources traditionally offered through the *Pashtunwali* code of

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[354] Identification cards must include photographs and thumb prints to prevent fraud.

melmastia (food and shelter) and internal charities can be denied. Also, as the population feels more secure, the flow of intelligence will increase, leading Coalition forces to the thousands of weapons, munitions, and explosives caches throughout the region. These resources should be consolidated and used by local security forces or destroyed.

Monetary resources pose a much greater problem. Porous borders and mountainous terrain between Afghanistan and the FATA make it impossible to completely stem the smuggling of men, armaments and *sakat* (religious donations akin to tithing). The Afghan government and Coalition forces must focus on the major source of Taliban money, which poisons the population and some IROA officials: opium. As the oil spot zones approach poppy producing areas like Helmand province, the government must implement a finely balanced combination of crop eradication, interdiction and alternative development and crop opportunities.[355] Eradication and alternative development efforts should take place in reconstruction and security zones, with interdiction activities targeting drug labs and the prosecution of drug traffickers, drug lords and corrupt officials executed in the disruption zones. The benefits of living within the RZ can be conveyed through a focused JIT information operations campaign and will likely cause farmers and village elders to vie to participate in the legitimate system.[356]

2. Counter Production Strategy

a) ***Target***: The counter production strategy targets the Taliban propaganda machine that influences the sympathies of the populace: teaching, training, recruiting, and propaganda.

b) ***Taliban Critical Linkages, Strengths and Weaknesses***:

The Taliban ideology is another critical linkage for many hard-core members of the organization, although it may be less relevant for others. Access to *madrassahs* for a steady stream of ideologically motivated recruits for high-risk missions like suicide

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[355] James L. Jones (ret), Thomas R. Pickering, et al, *Afghanistan Study Group: Revitalizing our Efforts, Rethinking our Strategies* (Washington DC: Center for the Study of the Presidency), January 30, 2008, www.thepresidency.org/pubs/Afghan_Study_Group_final.pdf (accessed April 8, 2008).

[356] See *Afghanistan Study Group*, 31-33, for further discussion on counter narcotics tools and strategy. This hypothetical situation is based on the successful implementation of the oil spot approach in Malaysia and the Philippines.

attacks is critical. It is assumed that the ideology itself is vulnerable if approached carefully through mainstream Muslim scholars. The Taliban's propaganda machine provides the critical linkage between hard-core ideologues and the sympathetic or intimidated populace, leading to further recruiting, teaching and training. This strategy must exploit the Taliban's weaknesses, including their history of oppressive rule, atypical interpretation of Islam, limited cross-ethnic legitimacy, use of coercive measures to force support, sectarianism and opposition from tribal elders.

c)   *Recommended Approach:*

The first step in combating the Taliban's propaganda machine is to analyze their message and disseminate this information down to the lowest level. The Afghan and Pakistani government and security forces, as well as NATO, ISAF and U.S. forces, must understand matters such as the Taliban's draft constitution, night letters, and strategic aims. With this understanding, Afghan and Pakistani[357] information operations can challenge the Taliban's aims, exploiting every blunder, suicide attack and crime against the population to reveal the dark side of the Taliban. Countering the Taliban's propaganda can also be conducted by reporting government successes, especially in development. The government must manage popular expectations for reconstruction to prevent disillusionment.[358]   The population in the contested red and pink areas must understand that the Taliban operations prevent reconstruction and development in those areas.   Also, fissures in the Taliban organization must be exploited to highlight the infighting among regional Taliban organizations.   These fractures can be magnified by promoting and reporting on repatriated Taliban.

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[357] Afghan and Pakistani personnel must lead information operations. Due to Pashtun xenophobia and the predominately Christian Coalition personnel, the Coalition forces have limited legitimacy. Samples witnessed differences in popular acceptance of information operation messages delivered by U.S. PSYOP teams, ANA soldiers or local officials.
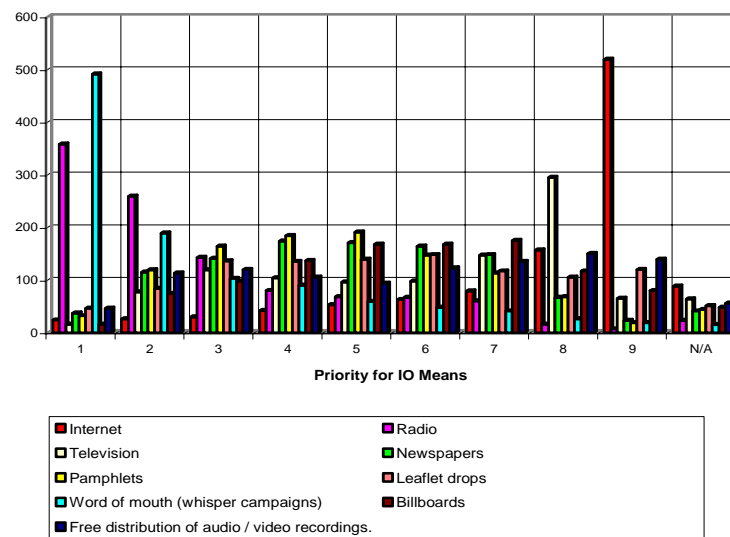
[358] Foxley, 18-19.

Figure 49.   Suggested Priority of Information Operations Means

The survey identifies the perceived best methods of implementing an information operation campaign in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Figure 49 above).   Word of mouth scores the highest of all forms of communication, while radio is a close second. Most respondents rated these two forms at the top because of their known effectiveness and the low literacy rates in the Pashtun tribal areas.[359]   All written forms of communication scored very low. Written forms do have some utility, because HN JIT, controlled oil spot region religious leaders, or IO specialists can read aloud in schools, trade schools, *shuras*, local bazaars and mosques. Radio can reach the distant population, as can word of mouth conveyed by travelers between reconstruction zones and contested areas. Training and equipping Afghan and local tribesmen in Pakistan to deliver a concentrated information campaign is paramount. The focus of the operations should be to challenge the Taliban and reveal weaknesses while promoting the successes of the Afghan and Pakistani governments through media that reach most of the population. This may seem an oversimplified solution, but it is not being implemented across the Pashtun belt.[360]

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[359] This observation comes from Afsar's experience in the FATA and Samples' experience throughout southern Afghanistan, as well as from data in the *Afghanistan in 2007 Survey*, 97-108.

[360] Some units conduct information operations consistent with the recommendations in this thesis, but they represent a small minority.

3. Counter Output / Force Strategy

a) ***Target***: The counter output / force strategy targets the Taliban command structure, combative and technological cells, and recruiters: leaders, advisors, soldiers, technicians, supporters, and recruiters.

b) ***Taliban Critical Linkages, Strengths and Weaknesses***: The Taliban senior leadership and command structure is designed for success. The layout of Taliban organization as a scale-free network, and its directive control style decision-making mechanism at the top make it extremely vulnerable to targeted attacks on hubs.[361] Leadership targeting based on strong HUMINT will create serious problems for the organization. As mentioned in Strategy 2, attempts to create divisions or infighting along tribal lines will yield major dividends. The advisors, soldiers, technicians, supporters and recruiters are all targets of opportunity and do not serve as critical linkages but as the end products of the Taliban's production mechanisms. This strategy focuses on countering the Taliban's strengths of integration into human terrain, use of physical terrain and new TTPs.

c) ***Recommended Approach:*** The most effective way to implement this strategy is to increase the capacity of the ANA, ANP and Pakistan's FC and Khassadars. The Afghan and Pakistani governments must continue to invest in developing, training and sustaining security forces. The NATO and U.S. governments must "focus more efforts and resources on training and standing up the ANA and recruiting, training, and providing adequate pay and equipment to the ANP to maintain security in an area once coalition forces depart."[362] Without a properly trained security force that shares cultural, ethnic and religious linkages with the local population, the oil spot approach will not succeed. Coalition forces must continue to fight by, with, and through indigenous forces. Security forces with unproven capabilities should continue to operate alongside Coalition forces while more advanced ANA, ANP and FC can fight independently with the limited assistance of

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[361] Barabási explains that all scale-free networks are secure against taking out of individual nodes (middle or low level leadership) but are very vulnerable to targeted attacks on hubs (top leaders and facilitators.) For details, see Barabási.

[362] *Afghan Study Group*, 13.

embedded military and police trainers as combat multipliers with air support, access to QRF and medical evacuation.[363] Coalition forces should remember T. E. Lawrence's article 15, applied here to Afghanistan:

> Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better that [Afghans] do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them. Actually, also, under the very odd conditions of [Afghanistan], your practical work will not be as good as, perhaps, you think it is.[364]
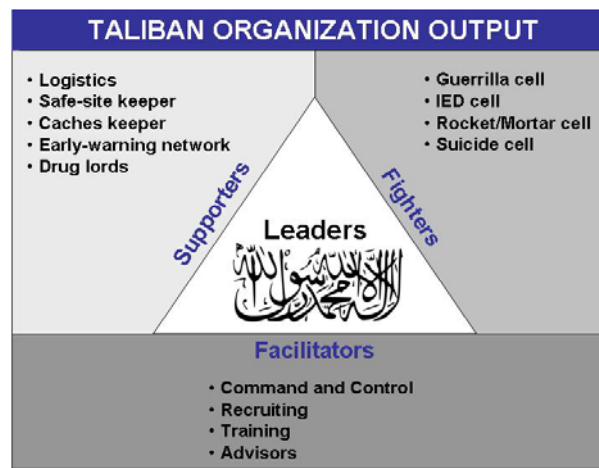
Figure 50.   Taliban Organization Output[365]

As the ANA, ANP, and FC operate alongside Coalition forces and embedded trainers, they must remember that tactical success guarantees nothing in a COIN fight. All operations must be intelligence driven to avoid harassment of those from whom they hope to gain support. With the inflow of intelligence from population that sees growing government legitimacy, targeting leader hubs, fighters, facilitators, and supporters will become more successful.   In operations against these cells, security forces must not overreact. Overreaction, such as use of air power in populated areas, kills innocent civilians and provokes the desire for revenge. As the oil spot grows, many large population centers will be out of the Taliban's reach, and they will be relegated to isolated areas where security forces

[363] *Afghan Study Group*, 13-14.

[364] Adapted from T. E. Lawrence, *The Arab Bulletin*, August 20, 1917, from http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_27_Articles_of_T.E._Lawrence, (accessed April 10, 2008).

[365] Adopted from model found in Donald C. Bolduc and Mike Erwin, "The Anatomy of an Insurgency: An Enemy Organizational Analysis," *Special Warfare*, July-August 2007, Vol. 20, Issue 4, 15.

can find, fix and finish them with little fear of collateral damage. This is where Coalition forces take away the human and physical terrain strengths from the Taliban. Information operations must be integrated into missions, exploiting successes and mitigating setbacks. The IO cell should write the narrative before the operation to win the race to get the story out. With security and stability established and the Taliban cells disrupted, Afghan and Pakistani government legitimacy will grow.

4. Counter Authority Strategy

a)   *Target:* The counter authority strategy targets the Taliban's authority and legitimacy: political footprint, control and influence of populace.

b)   *Taliban Critical Linkages, Strengths and Weaknesses*: Popular support is the critical linkage to the legitimacy that the Taliban needs to further their insurgency. This strategy views authority and legitimacy as a zero sum game between the Taliban and the Afghan and Pakistan governments. Promoting government legitimacy makes government better able to counter Taliban popular support and the passivity of fence sitters.

c)   *Recommended Approach:* First, both Afghanistan and Pakistan should promote the legitimacy of their governments through rule of law, development and an expanded sense of nationalism. Where possible, tribal structures should be used against extremism, bringing a gradual political change. In Pakistan, mainstream political parties[366] can also assist at the grass roots level by influencing the political situation in tribal areas. In regards to development, the authors ascribe to Natsios' nine principles of reconstruction and development implemented through the oil spot approach and adapted to the unique circumstances in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[367]

> 1. *Ownership* – build upon the leadership, participation, and commitment of Afghans and Pakistanis, thus providing the buy-in necessary to succeed.

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[366] The recent victory of the Pakistan's ANP political party over the MMA provides a vehicle that could facilitate this recommendation.

[367] Andrew S. Natsios, "The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development," *Parameters*, Autumn 2005; 35, 3; 7-19.

2. *Capacity Building* – Coalition, Afghan, and Pakistani forces must strengthen local institutions, teach technical skills, and promote policies agreeable to the populace.

3. *Sustainability* – Programs must be designed taking into consideration cultural variables so that the impact can endure.

4. *Selectivity* – Resources must be allocated based upon the needs of the people that support the government.

5. *Assessment* – Diligent research must be conducted in order to assure design of development for the local conditions. One size does not fit all in different regions and population centers.

6. *Results* – Objectives must be identified upfront in order to allow the proper allocation of resources necessary to succeed.

7. *Partnership* – Coordination between donor governments, organizations, and private sector is paramount ensure strategic effects.

8. *Flexibility* – Coalition forces and the Afghan and Pakistani governments must be prepared for fluid conditions and take advantage of opportunities.

Two overarching ideals are required to provide for the growing legitimacy of the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan: (1) "reconstruction aid and development assistance must flow into a region immediately after it is cleared of Taliban presence by the Coalition"[368] and (2) Coalition forces and donor communities must not take credit for development.

The survey posed the question of where to begin in development and reconstruction projects (Figure 51). The participants identified employment opportunities as the number one priority. Building trade schools in population centers and beginning massive construction efforts to build infrastructure, the second highest priority, would provide opportunities to pick up a shovel or a trowel as opposed to an AK-47. Clean and potable water sources rated third, while building schools, medical facilities and irrigation schemes rated close in importance.

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[368] *Afghan Study Group*, 15.

With few natural resources, the U.N. should promote a Central Asian free trade block and limited investment insurances to help spur foreign investment.
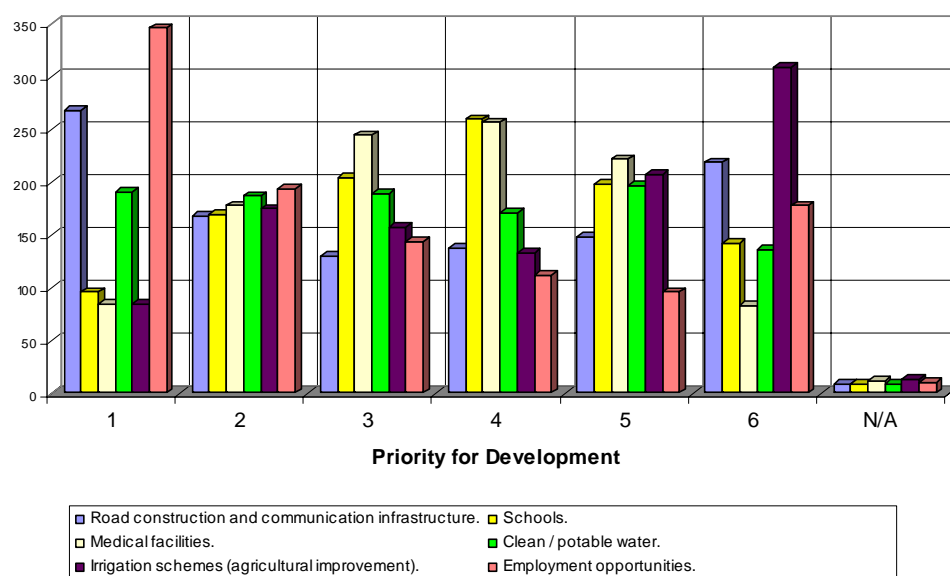

Figure 51.   Suggested Priority for Development

D.   COORDINATED EFFORT

A major problem plaguing the COIN effort is inadequate coordination and consensus among Coalition partners manifested as conflicting methodologies, ROEs, national caveats and intelligence sharing practices. There is a need to harmonize the strategies as far as possible.

The coordination issues gain significance due to the cross border nature of Taliban and instability in the FATA and border regions of Afghanistan. Because of the region's history and administrative nature and local sensitivities, stability efforts have to be routed through local mechanisms.[369] For effective COIN measures on both sides of the border, operations and intelligence must be coordinated. The Durand Line issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be resolved to facilitate clear demarcation of border and responsibilities. In addition, the existing tripartite mechanism between Afghanistan,

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[369] *Afghan Study Group*, 37-38.

Pakistan and the U.S. forces should be augmented and given more authority to decide key issues of strategy. For better coordination of operations at tactical and operational levels, cross-border communication links between tactical and operational commanders need to be improved. In addition to the current practice of flag meetings and satellite phone communications, Afghan, U.S. and Pakistani forces should consider exchanging liaison officers down to brigade level to coordinate operational details and allay misperceptions about the intentions and operations of the other side. The same liaison channel might allow rapid passage of intelligence in both directions, especially from technical intelligence means often blocked by classification concerns about handling by non-NATO and non-U.S. personnel.

A similar coordination issue is an inadequate ISAF command structure that complicates mission coordination, approval and support mechanisms. Presently, the U.S., NATO ISAF, and ANSF work within the same national boundaries but with different operational mechanisms, strategic visions and caveats. The command structure should be redesigned to streamline procedures and complement the efforts of the various components while taking into account national considerations.[370] A strategic dialogue between Coalition partners to seek consensus on the approach to the insurgency will assist in this regard.

E.   SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The thesis takes a broad approach to evaluating the Taliban organization as a first step in understanding specific aspects of the Taliban and the insurgency in the Pashtun belt. The study has two major limitations: it presents the Taliban as a single organization, and the survey research has limited scope.

The description of the Taliban used in this study is general; the research does not identify the differences among regional groups using the Taliban title. The authors believe that examination of the nature of the groups that make up the Taliban movement is necessary for a more thorough understanding of the organization.

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[370] *Afghan Study Group*, 17-19.

The survey sample tilts heavily towards military operatives, which biases the responses. In addition, the survey asked participants to rank various options according to their perceptions, but might not have presented an adequate set of response options.

This study inspires topics for further research. For example, deeper analysis of the religious and ideological components of the insurgency might aid visualization of a host nation led, Coalition forces supported information campaign. Similarly, exploration of the potential rifts between Taliban groups based on tribal or ethnic lines could prove beneficial to Coalition forces. In the realm of reconstruction and nation building, there is a need for more research on use of PRT style teams to conduct grassroots level economic growth in the Pashtun cultural environment. All such this research will facilitate better understating of the insurgency and the best approach to stability and peace in the region.

F.   CONCLUSION

One must understand the enemy, the environment and nature of the insurgency to develop an effective counterinsurgency strategy. The study advocates sweeping change in current strategies and employment techniques in light of the Taliban's strengths and weaknesses. The Taliban have become a networked style organization that uses local environments and gains power under the influence of other modern transnational networks. Their center of gravity is the rural, war-weary Pashtun population. They compete by capitalizing on popular concerns, and effectively adapt to changing COIN strategies.

The Coalition forces have also transformed, with some success, but Coalition strategies suffer numerous problems. To defeat the Taliban in the battle to control the masses, the Coalition forces need to revamp their strategies, making them comprehensive and balanced. The authors recommend a shift to a supply-side strategy of severing the Taliban's critical linkages by countering the insurgent field force and command structure, stopping organizational inputs and resources, de-legitimizing its ideology and messages, and targeting its operational mechanisms while emphasizing economic development activities. Regional stability and the success of the global war on terror depend on

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Coalition strategy. It is about time that we change the game on our terms; otherwise, the opponents will change it on theirs. As General David Richards says, "We need to realize we could actually fail here." [371]

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[371] David Richards, the former commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, as quoted in Bhadrakumar.

APPENDIX – TALIBAN SURVEY

A.   PURPOSE

The purpose of the Taliban Survey is to acquire qualitative and quantitative information to support thesis research at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

B.   REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPANTS

The survey elicits operational, practical, and academic knowledge from Coalition military and civilian personnel with experience in Afghanistan or Pakistan.

C.   SCOPE

The survey focuses on the perceptions of the participants about several aspects of the Taliban organization and its interaction with its environment. It looks at the strategic and operational COIN methods employed by the Coalition and asks participants about their opinions about the COIN measures and nation building efforts. The survey also elicits insights of the participants about the Taliban's strengths, weaknesses, critical linkages, and adaptation trends.

D.   KEY FINDINGS

The majority of those surveyed believe that the Coalition has been moderately successful in its counterinsurgency efforts, with only 20 percent believing that the Coalition is unsuccessful or in a stalemate. Participants ascribe the current success to two primary factors: the trust and confidence of the people, and cultural understanding. They believe that large-scale military sweep operations have had little or no success. The most common failures are attributed to a lack of intelligence and employment of inappropriate kinetic and non-kinetic strategies. Given limited resources, those surveyed would focus on popular support and intelligence gathering activities that go hand-in-hand. They believe kill/capture missions have limited utility in the fight for popular support.

The respondents maintain that the Taliban's principal strength and advantage over the Coalition is its superior knowledge of the human and physical terrain. Their success through the years is due to their ideology and access to what one participant called "a never ending pool of recruits." According to the survey, the critical linkages for Taliban's survival include popular support, followed by money and areas of limited government control where they regroup, train, and prepare to fight. The Taliban's weaknesses, which can be exploited by a resolute information operation campaign, are their indiscriminant use of violence and intimidation of the population, as well as their history of repression.

E.   SURVEY METHODOLOGY

1.   General

The survey was administered to aid the formulation of a thesis about the evolution of the Taliban after 9/11. It was conducted in November 2007 and describes the opinions of military and civilian members of various government agencies and academics with experience relevant to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Taliban. The sample includes a fairly good mix of military officers, civilians from government agencies, and academics from the U.S., Pakistan, Afghanistan and NATO countries. Military officers with experience in the region comprise the majority of the survey population. The survey was hosted online on the website of the *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies* at the Naval Postgraduate School. To avoid unsolicited responses, participants were sent a link to the survey with a password. A total of 1526 persons responded to the survey. Of these, 942 replied to all the quantitative questions and 871 went on to complete the detailed opinion-oriented questions. The details of the sample are described in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.   Country or Region of Origin of Respondents
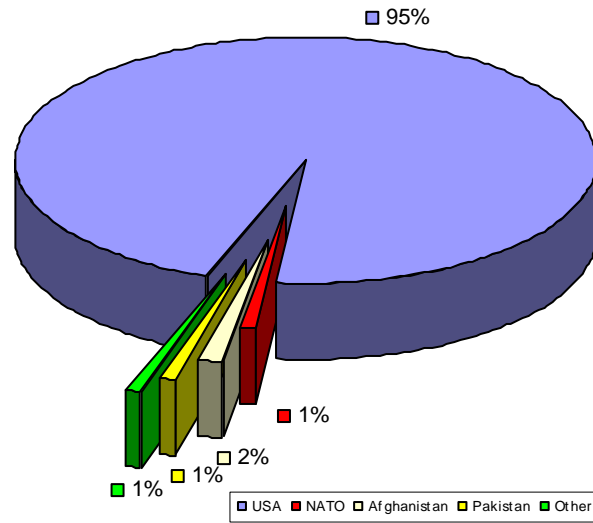
Figure 52.   Country of Origin of Survey Respondents

The bulk of the respondents are from the U.S. (1461, 95 percent), with a small response from NATO, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

3.   Organizational Affiliations and Status

The majority of respondents belong to the military, with a small response from civilian government agencies and academia. Within the military, there is a major tilt toward conventional forces (77.7 percent). The rank structure of the respondents offers a much wider spread, with Captains the largest group (32 percent).
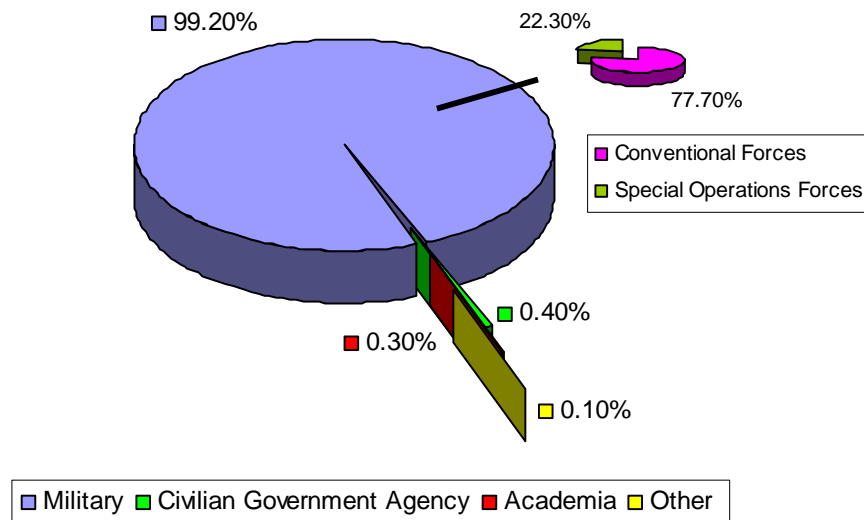
Figure 53. Organizational Affiliation of Respondents
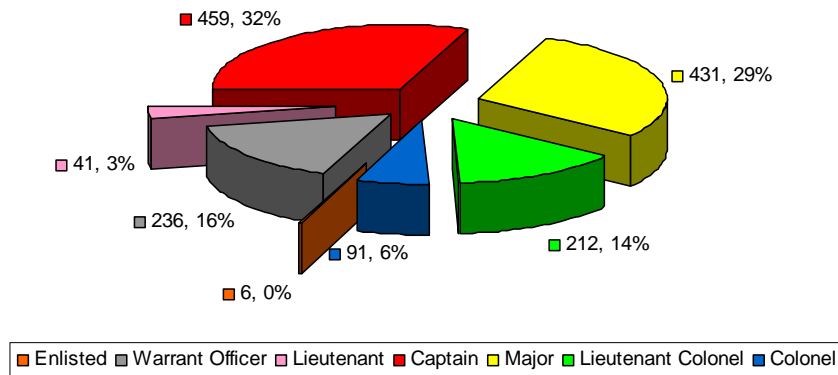
Figure 54. Military Rank of Respondents

4. Regional Experience of Respondents

The sample represents a wide mix of experience in different regions of the area. Geographical boundaries used in the questionnaire are described in Figure 56 below. Those with prior experience in RC East in Afghanistan are in the majority, followed by

those with experience in RC South. These are the areas where the Taliban have been most active in the last six years. Therefore, the sample offers a good perspective on the problem area.
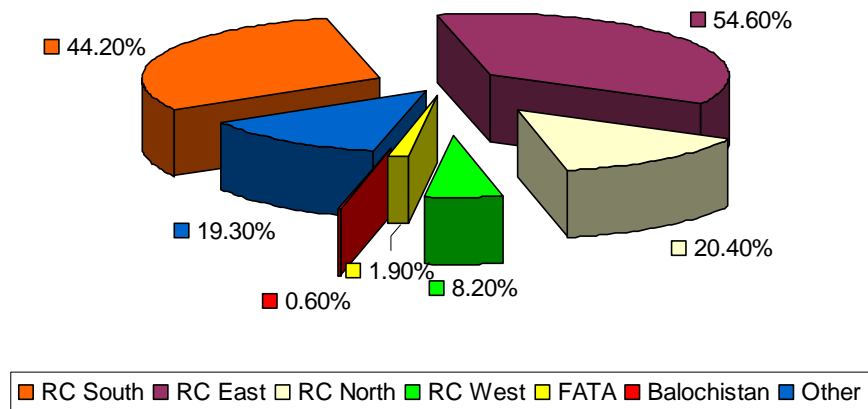
Figure 55.   Regional Experience of the Respondents

Figure 56.   Geographical Boundaries of Areas of Responsibility

F.   SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1.   How would you rate the success of military operations against the Taliban during the last five years?

This question gauges the overall perceptions of the success of Coalition forces operations against the Taliban. A total of 1080 persons replied to the question. Overall, the answers show optimism, as 63.6 percent rank the Coalition as moderately successful in its military operations, while only about 20 percent describe the situation as some shade of stalemate or failure.
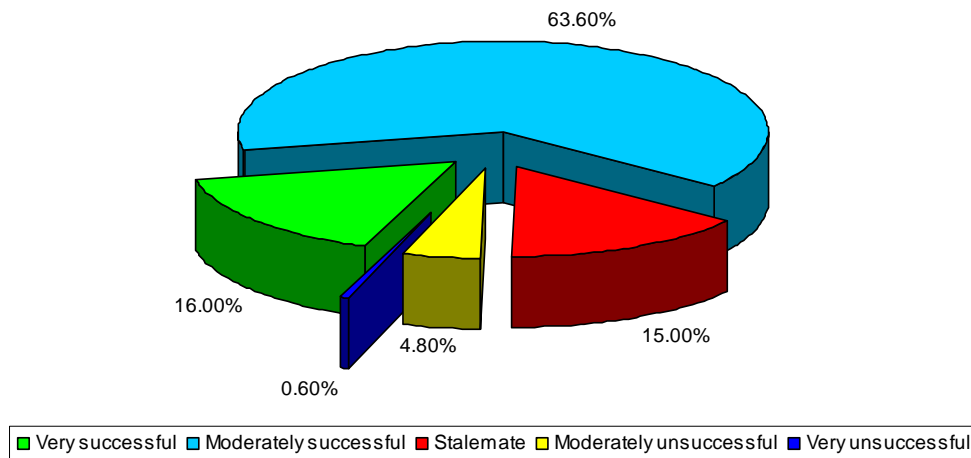
Figure 57.   Perceptions about Success of Military Operations Against Taliban

2.   Please prioritize the importance of factors relative to your organization's success in the Pashtun belt.

One objective of the survey is to get feedback on methodologies that had previously been helpful in the counter insurgency effort against the Taliban. This question, therefore, asks respondents to rank the value of various factors in gaining any degree of success.
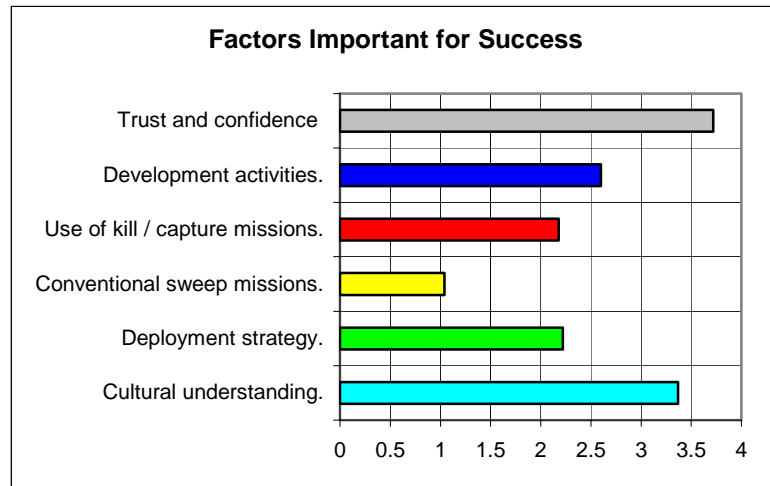
Figure 58.   Relative Importance of Factors for Coalition Success

A total of 1,080 persons responded to the question. Trust and confidence from the people, cultural understanding, and development activities feature prominently as the top three priorities, while large-scale sweep operations and kill/capture missions are considered harmful and receive the lowest ratings.
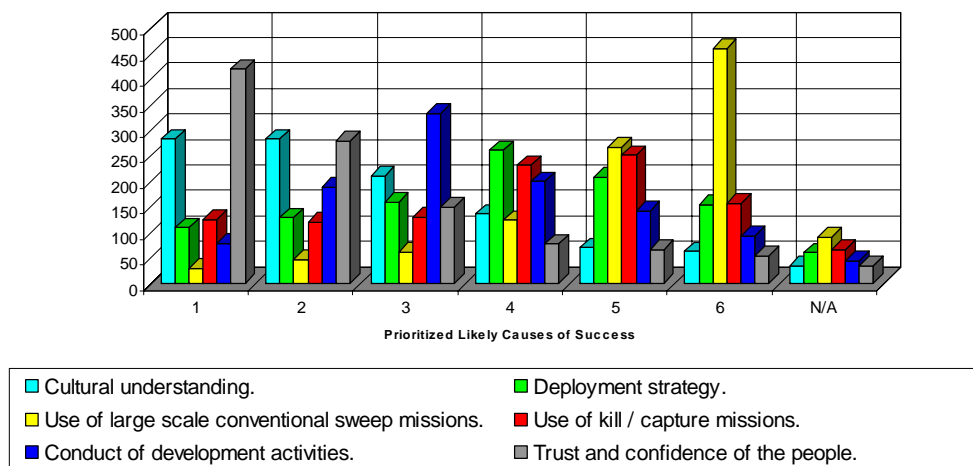
Figure 59.   Factors Important for Success in the Pashtun Belt

3. **Please prioritize the importance of factors relative to your organization's failures in the Pashtun belt.**

This question is the counterpart to the previous one. It is aimed at identifying likely causes of failure in the campaign against the Taliban.

Likely Causes of Failure
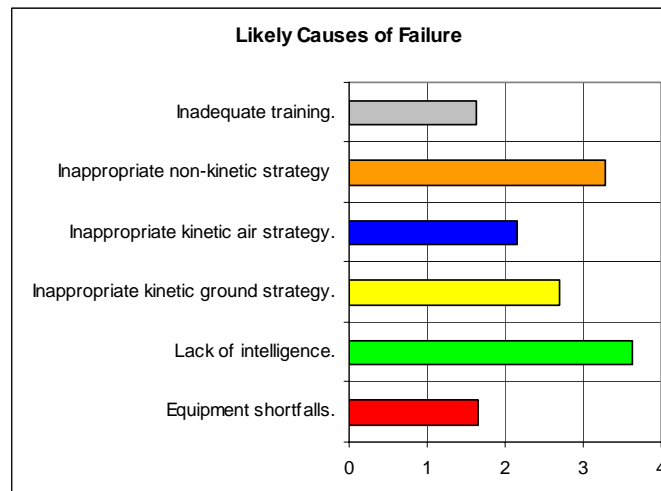
Figure 60. Relative Importance of Likely Causes of Coalition Failure

This question was answered by 1080 persons. Inadequate intelligence emerges as the top reason for failure, followed by inappropriate non-kinetic strategies (e.g., faulty IO campaign, reconstruction activities, or civil affairs).

Prioritized Likely Causes of Failure

■ Equipment shortfalls.
■ Lack of intelligence.
□ Inappropriate kinetic ground strategy.
■ Inappropriate kinetic air strategy.
■ Inappropriate non-kinetic strategy (IO campaign, reconstruction, civil affairs, etc.).
▨ Inadequate training.
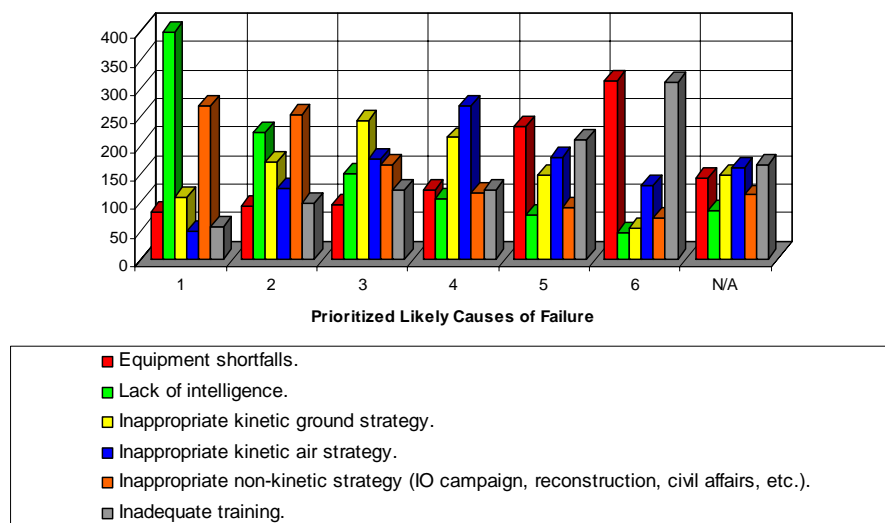
Figure 61. Likely Causes of Coalition Failure

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4. **Please prioritize the most effective measures employed by the Taliban against Coalition forces during their operations (kinetic/non-kinetic).**

The question is designed to analyze the effectiveness of different kinetic means employed by the Taliban.
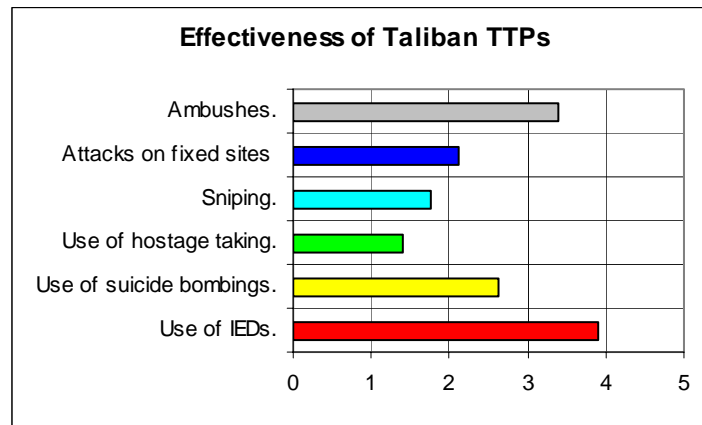
Figure 62.   Relative Effectiveness of Taliban TTPs

A total of 1080 people responded to this question. Use of IEDs is considered the most effective means used by the Taliban; ambushes and suicide bombings rank second and third. Hostage taking is deemed least effective among the Taliban tactics listed.
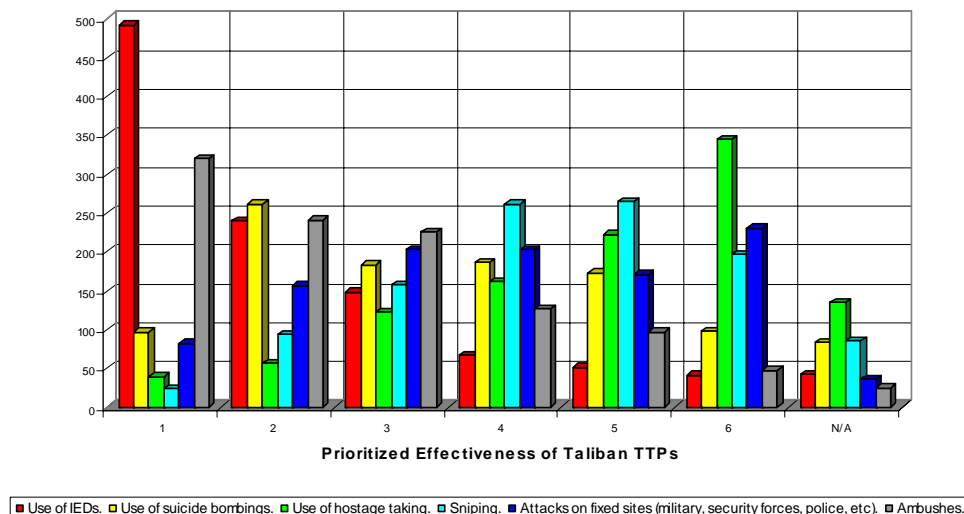
Figure 63.   Prioritized Effectiveness of Taliban TTPs

5.   Please rank the order of priority that you think our COIN strategy should be.

This question assesses the suggestions for changes in COIN strategy in Afghanistan.
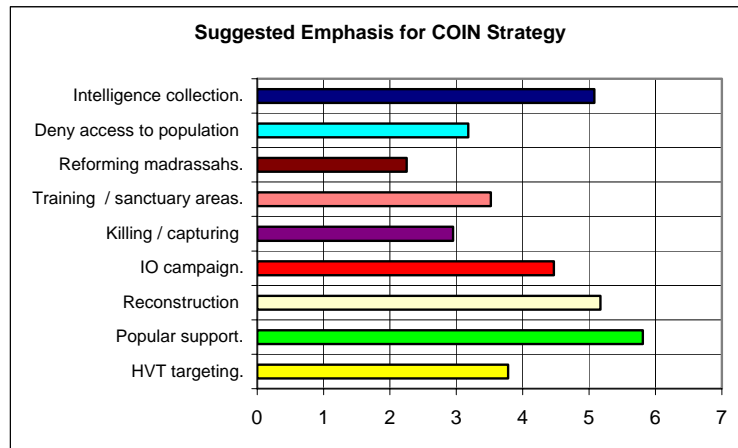
Figure 64.   Suggested COIN Strategy

A total of 1,080 people responded. Most recommend added emphasis on gaining popular support, effective intelligence collection, and economic development, while madrassah reforms and killing/capturing Taliban have the lowest ratings.
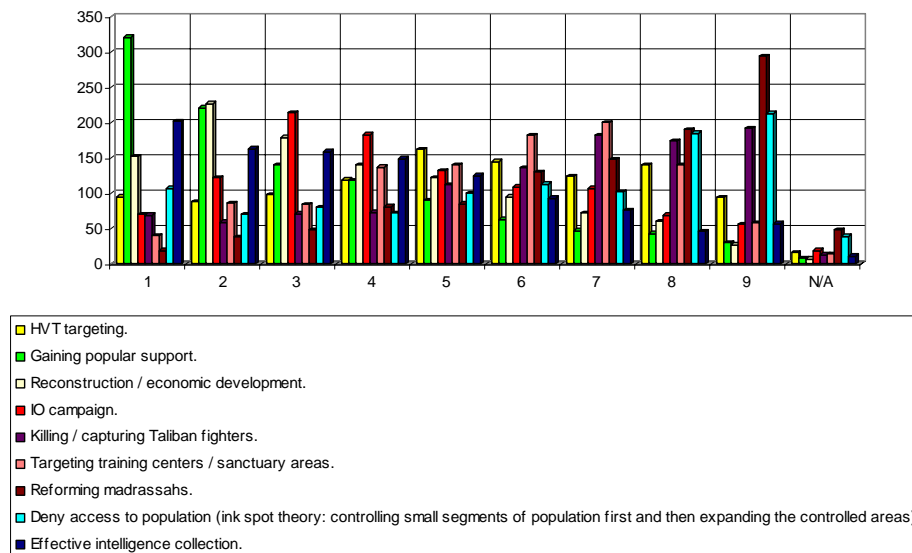
Figure 65.   Suggested Priority of COIN Strategy

6. Please prioritize the most important reconstruction/economic development activities that should be conducted.

The aim of this question is to assess the relative importance of development activities support of COIN efforts.
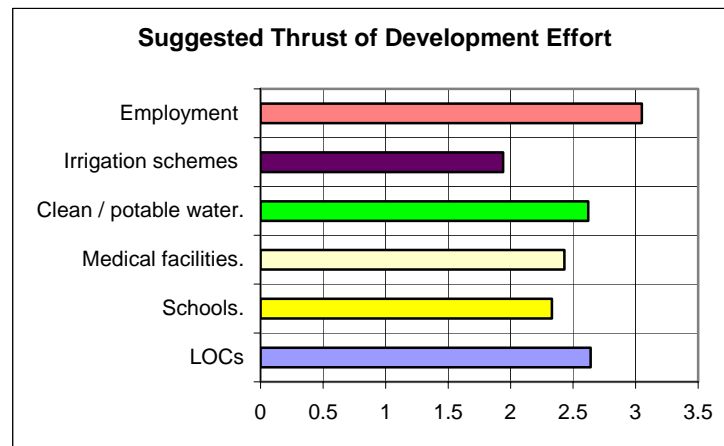
Figure 66.   Suggested Development Effort

A total of 1,080 people responded to this question.   The majority of the respondents consider the creation of employment opportunities, road construction, and infrastructure development (LOCs) to be most important, while irrigation schemes and improvement in agriculture are given a lower priority.
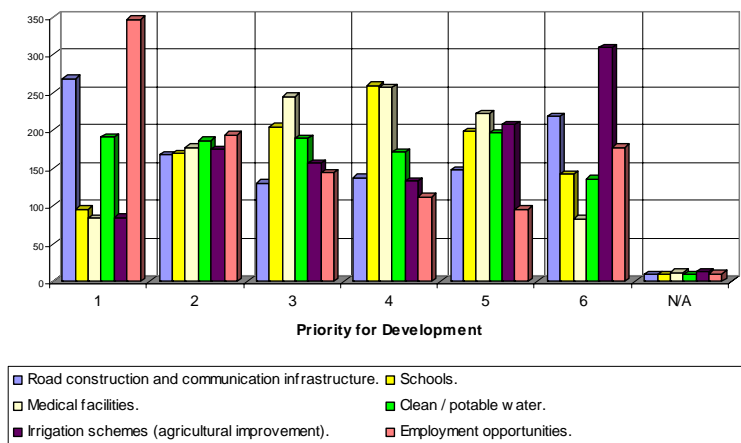
Figure 67.   Suggested Priority of Development Activities

7.   Please prioritize the most effective means for implementation of an IO campaign against the Taliban.

This question seeks to assess the viability of IO platforms in support of the COIN strategy.
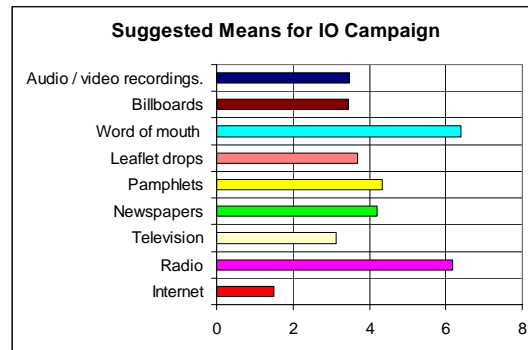
Figure 68.   Suggested IO Means

A total of 1080 people responded. Most consider the use of whisper campaigns as most effective, with radio following closely behind. Internet is thought to be the least effective for obvious reasons.
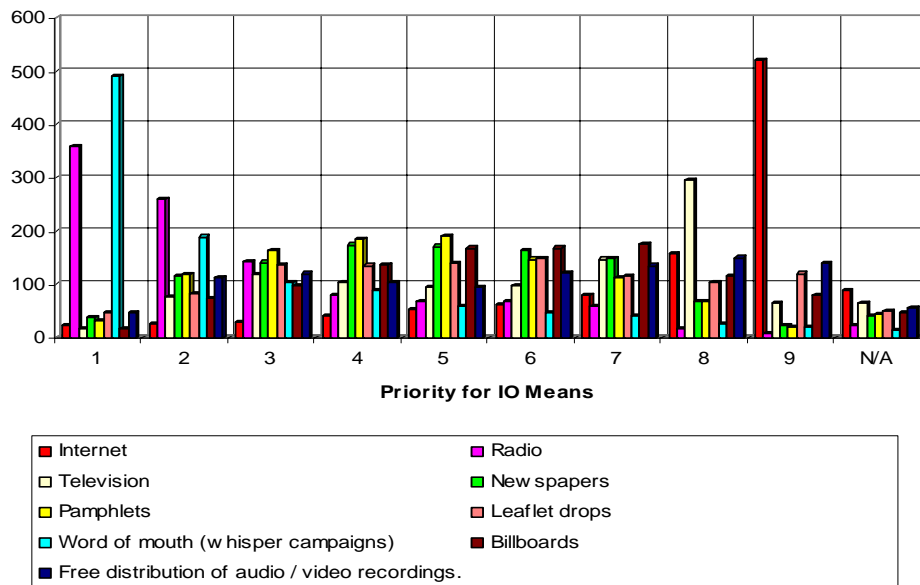

Figure 69.   Suggested Priority of IO Means

8. Please prioritize the means by which you can effectively control a village, area, or population in the Pashtun belt.

This question elicits suggestions about the best means to exercise population control in a Pashtun village in a COIN setting.
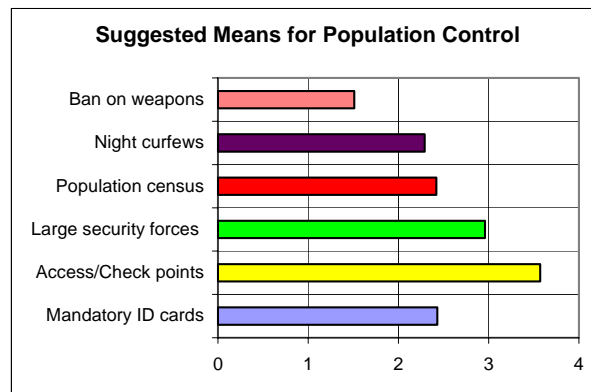
Figure 70.   Suggested Means for Population Control

A total of 1,080 people responded. The majority list establishment of checkpoints as the first measure, followed by continued presence of security forces. It is interesting to note that a suggested ban on carrying or possessing weapons received the lowest rating, probably due to peculiarities and demands of the Pashtun tribal culture and the security situation.
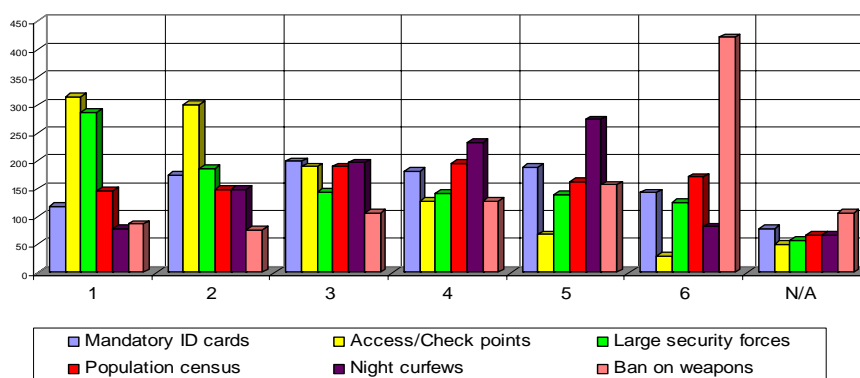
Figure 71.   Priority of Population Control Means

9. **Please prioritize the long-term political means by which we can overcome the problem of FATA in Pakistan.**

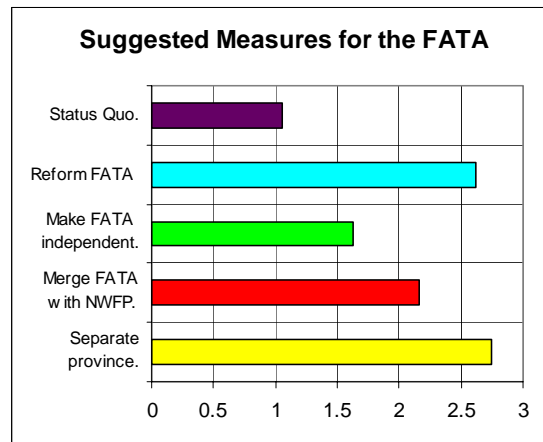This question seeks suggestions about the long-term future of FATA.

Figure 72.   Suggested Measures for FATA

A total of 1,080 people responded to this question. The majority of respondents did not prioritize the options and instead opted for N/A, probably because of insufficient understanding of the administrative structure of the area. Of those who did respond, most suggest is that it should be a separate province, followed by reforming FATA. Only a minority recommend maintaining the status quo.
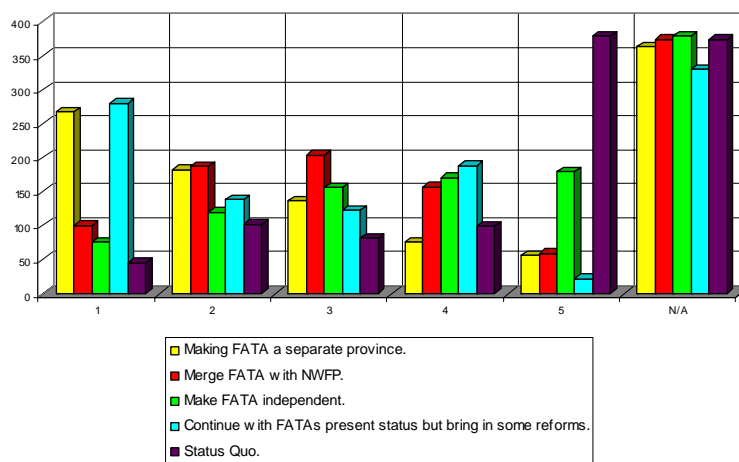

Figure 73.   Priority of Suggested Future Political Measures for FATA

10.   What are the possible objectives of the Taliban?

Respondents' perceptions of Taliban objectives are measured with this question, which was answered by 942 people.
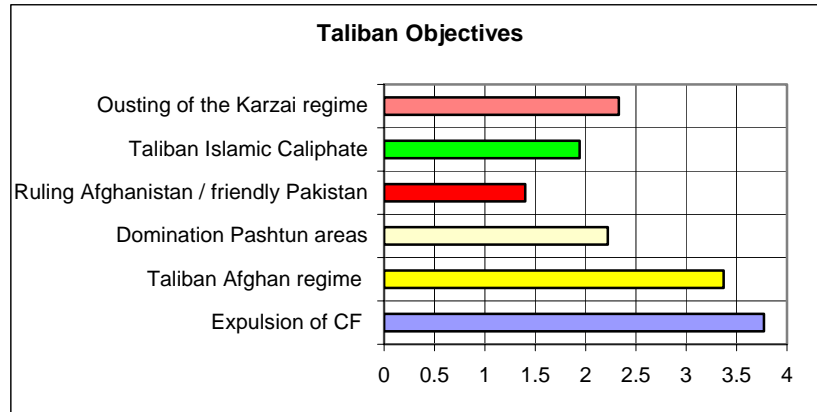

Figure 74.   Perceptions about Taliban Objectives

Most respondents consider the expulsion of Coalition Forces from Afghanistan as the primary Taliban objective, followed by establishment of a Taliban regime. Interestingly, a possible Taliban aim to dominate both Pakistan and Afghanistan gained the lowest rating.
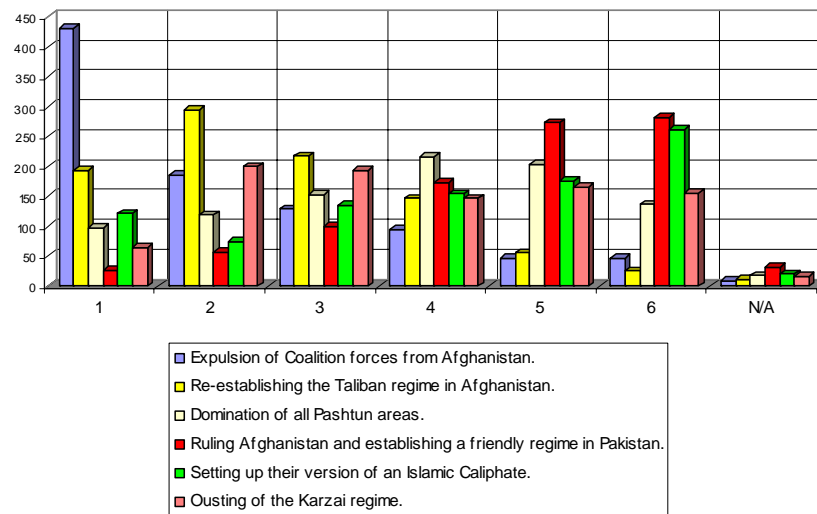

Figure 75.   Prioritized Likelihood of Taliban Objectives

11.   What is your perception about the Taliban's primary geographic orientation?

This question is a sequel to the previous question and seeks to assess the likely geographical limits of the Taliban as a movement. A total of 942 people responded to this question.   Most of the respondents (61.5 percent) consider the Taliban limited to traditional Pashtun lands, while 10.8 percent believe that the Taliban have global designs.
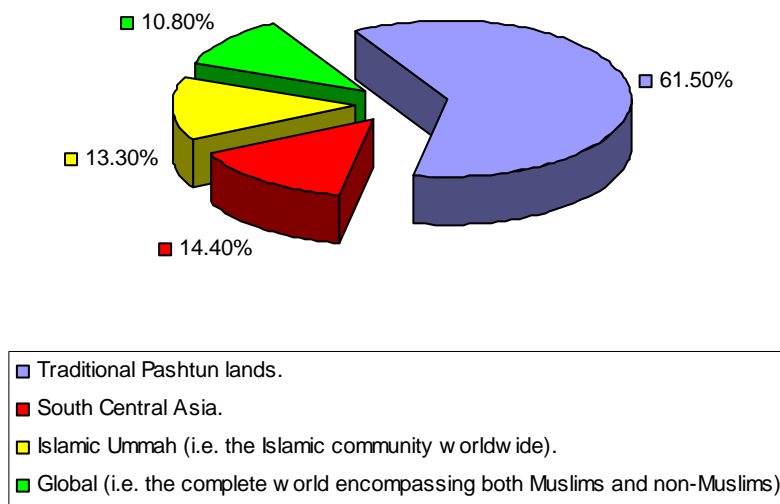

Figure 76.   Perceptions about Likely Strategic Orientation of Taliban

Figure 77.   Explanation of Geographical Terms Used

12. What are the factors considered important for the success of the Taliban according to their relative importance?

This question is designed to elicit responses about the possible factors important for success of the Taliban.
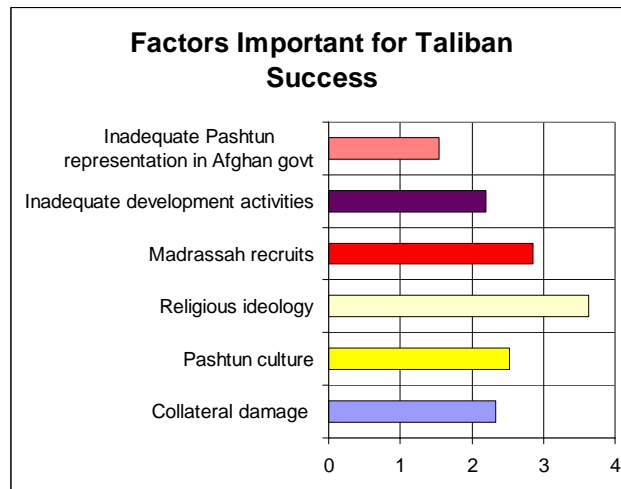

Figure 78. Factors Considered Important for Taliban Success

A total of 942 people responded to this question. The majority of the respondents consider the use of religious ideology by the Taliban to be most important to their success, while a perceived lack of Pashtun representation in the Afghan government ranked lowest.
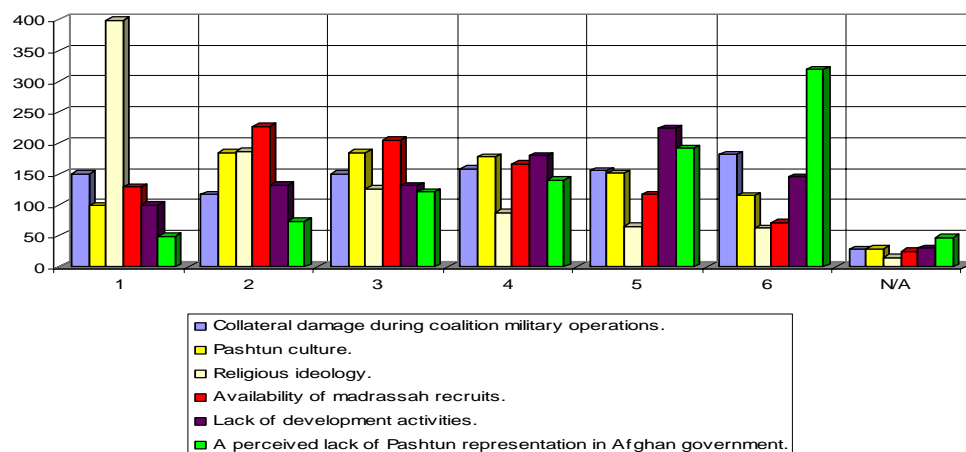

Figure 79. Priority of Factors Considered Important for Success of Taliban

13. Please rank the order of the perceived critical linkages necessary for the Taliban to succeed.

This question is designed to identify the Taliban's critical linkages in order to recommend a COIN strategy.
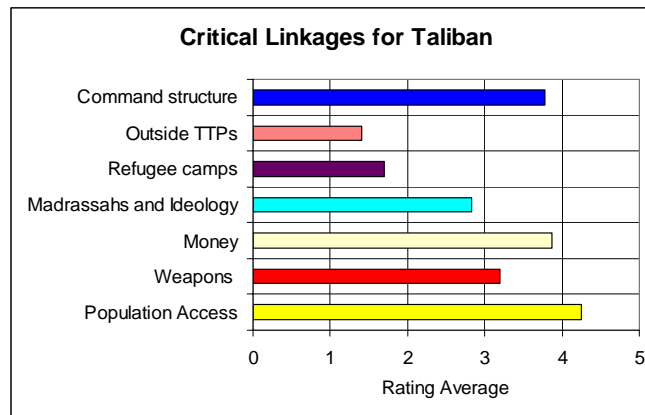

Figure 80.   Perceived Critical Linkages for Taliban

A total of 942 people responded to this question.   Access to population is considered the most important linkage for the Taliban, closely followed by access to money and command structures. Access to outside TTPs is considered the least important of the choices presented.
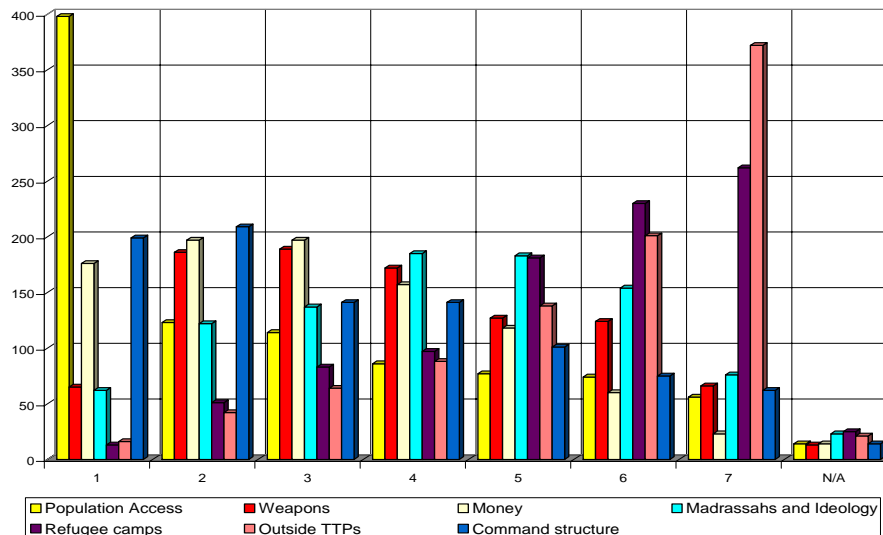

Figure 81.   Priority of Perceived Critical Linkages for Taliban

14. How would you prioritize the strengths of the Taliban as an organization or entity?

Linked to the previous question, this summarizes the perceived strengths of Taliban.
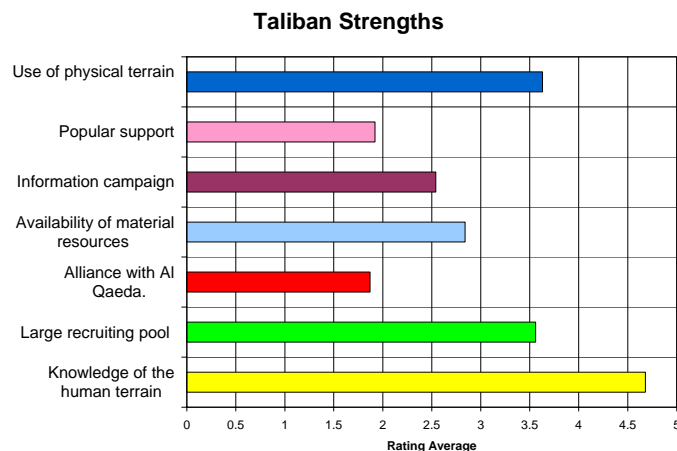

Figure 82.   Perceptions about Taliban Strengths

A total of 942 people responded to this question. Most respondents consider the Taliban's knowledge of human terrain to be their major strength, followed by their knowledge of physical terrain and availability of a large recruitment pool. Interestingly, popular support ranked much lower, probably as respondents consider that because of the Taliban's knowledge of culture and ability to use it to their advantage does not require a real population preference for them.
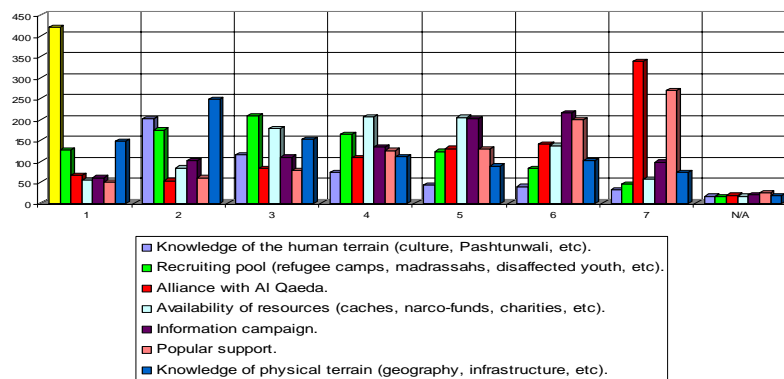

Figure 83.   Prioritization of Perceived Taliban Strengths

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15.   What is the decision-making mechanism within the Taliban at various levels?

This question measures the perceptions of the Taliban decision making process at various levels of the organization. A total of 942 people responded to this question.   For the purpose of this survey, directive control means broad, general guidance and decentralized execution, consultative control means making decisions based on consensus among the leaders, and autocratic control means giving out strict orders with exact details for execution. Most respondents believe the Taliban have a directive control mechanism at the strategic level, are consultation oriented at the operational level, and are autocratic at the tactical level.
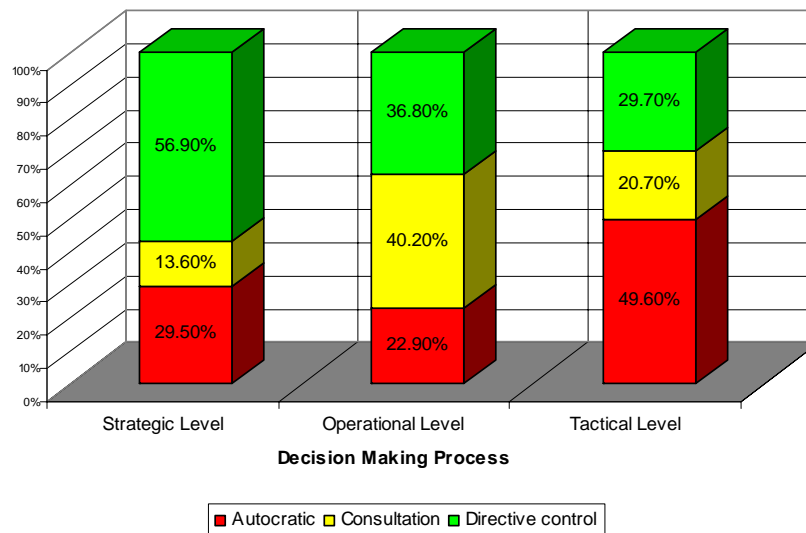

Figure 84.   Perceptions about Decision-making Mechanisms within Taliban

16.   How would you prioritize the weaknesses of the Taliban as an organization or entity?

This question seeks to identify Taliban weaknesses.

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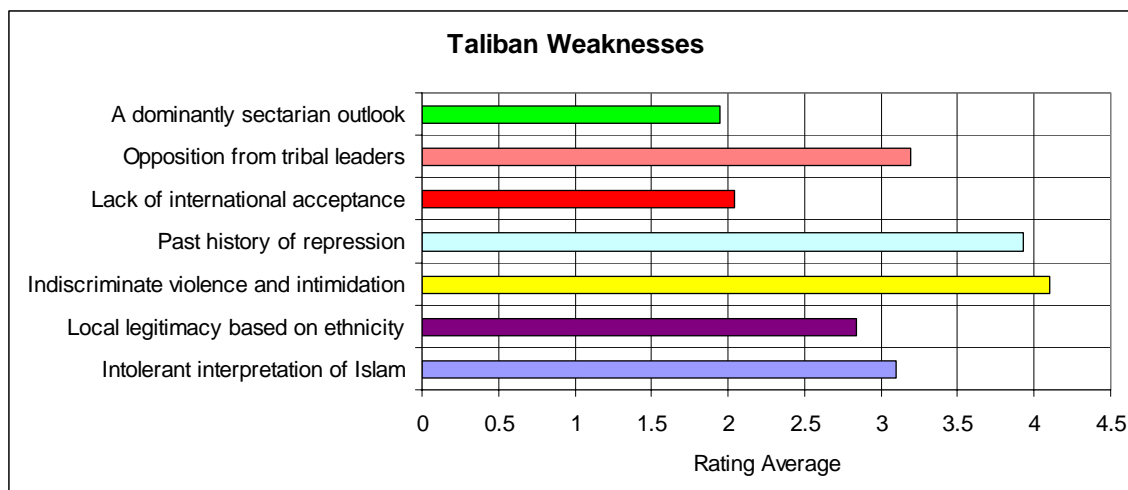
Figure 85.   Perceptions about Taliban Weaknesses

Most of the 942 respondents consider the use of indiscriminate violence and intimidation as the biggest weakness of the Taliban, followed by their past history of repression and opposition from tribal elders. The Taliban's sectarian outlook ranked last, probably because most respondents consider Taliban to be focused only in the Pashtun areas with small sectarian minorities.

Figure 86.   Prioritization of Perceived Weaknesses of the Taliban

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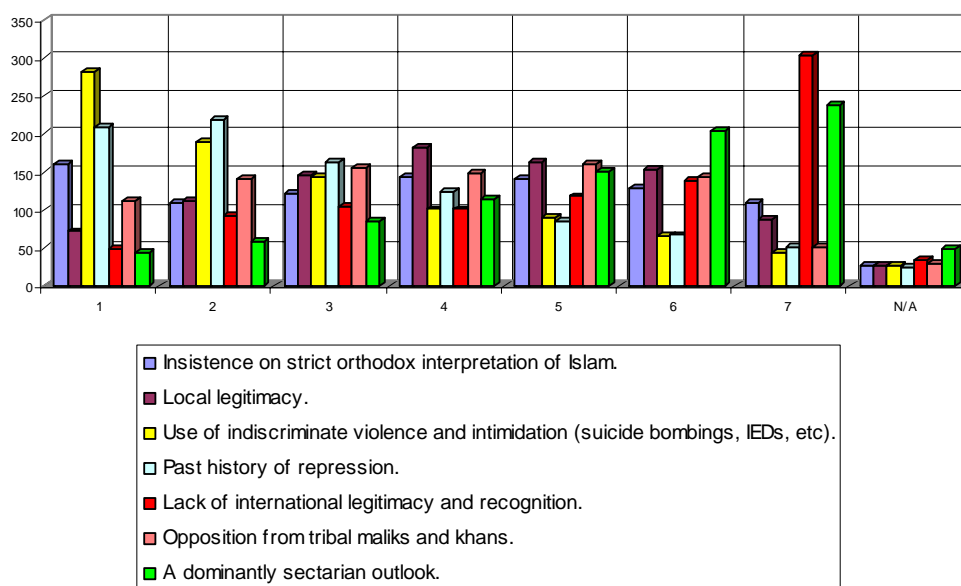Abbas, Hasan. "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan." *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 2 (January 2008): 1, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/ (accessed January 17, 2008).

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INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED FOR THESIS

The authors interviewed the following individuals during the course of research. Although not everyone is quoted in the main body of the thesis, their input proved invaluable to the authors in understanding and analyzing the subject.

	Name of the Person Interviewed	Rank	Duty Position/ Organization	Location of Interview	Date of Interview
•	Borer, Douglas	Professor	Defense Analysis Department, NPS	Monterey, CA	November 6, 2007
•	Bush, Aaron	Captain	US Special Forces	Fort Bragg, NC	November 15, 2007
•	Collins, Joseph	Professor	U.S. National Defense University	Washington, DC	November 20, 2007
•	Cox, Robert	Rear Admiral	Commander Joint Intelligence Center, USCENTCOM	Tampa, FL	November 14, 2007
•	Ecklund, Marshall	Major	USSOCOM	Tampa, FL	November 13, 2007
•	Genasci, Andy	Major	US Special Forces	Fort Bragg, NC	November 16, 2007
•	Griffin, Brandon	Captain	US Special Forces	Fort Bragg, NC	November 16, 2007
•	Ingram, Harold	Analyst	US State Department	Washington, DC	November 21, 2007
•	Johnson, Thomas	Professor	National Security Affairs Department, NPS	Monterey, CA	May 24, 2007
•	Kearney, Frank	Lieutenant General	Deputy Commander USSOCOM	Tampa, FL	November 13, 2007
•	Khan, Hamid	Lieutenant General	President Pakistan National	Monterey, CA (Lecture)	January 24, 2008

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	Name of the Person Interviewed	Rank	Duty Position/ Organization	Location of Interview	Date of Interview
			Defense University		
•	Lamm, David	Colonel (Retd)	Former Chief of Staff Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan	Washington, DC	November 20, 2007
•	McCoy, Benjamin	Sergeant First Class	USCENTCOM	Tampa, FL	November 14, 2007
•	Miller, Mark	Lieutenant Colonel	US Special Forces	Fort Bragg, NC	November 16, 2007
•	Moniz, Walter	Lieutenant Commander	Former IO officer, Canadian Navy	Monterey, CA	November 5, 2007
•	Perkins, Doug	Analyst	National Ground Intelligence Center	Charlottesville, VA	November 19, 2007
•	Porter, Kip	Analyst	National Ground Intelligence Center	Charlottesville, VA	November 19, 2007
•	Reeder, Edward	Colonel	Commander, 7th Special Forces Group	Fort Bragg, NC	November 15, 2007
•	Reiman, Chris	Special Agent	FBI	Tampa, FL	November 13, 2007
•	Ripley, Mike	Major	US Special Forces	Fort Bragg, NC	November 15, 2007
•	Rothstein, Hy	Professor	Defense Analysis Department, NPS	Monterey, CA	November 9, 2007
•	Stone, Kevin	Senior Analyst	National Ground Intelligence Center	Charlottesville, VA	November 19, 2007
•	Thomas, Beverly	Lieutenant Commander	USCENTCOM	Tampa, FL	November 14, 2007
•	Wiggins, James	Civilian	USCENTCOM	Tampa, FL	November

	Name of the Person Interviewed	Rank	Duty Position/ Organization	Location of Interview	Date of Interview
					14, 2007
•	Windsor, Don	Captain	US Special Forces	Fort Bragg, NC	November 15, 2007

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    Fort Bragg, NC

6. Harold Ingram
    U.S. State Department
    Washington, DC